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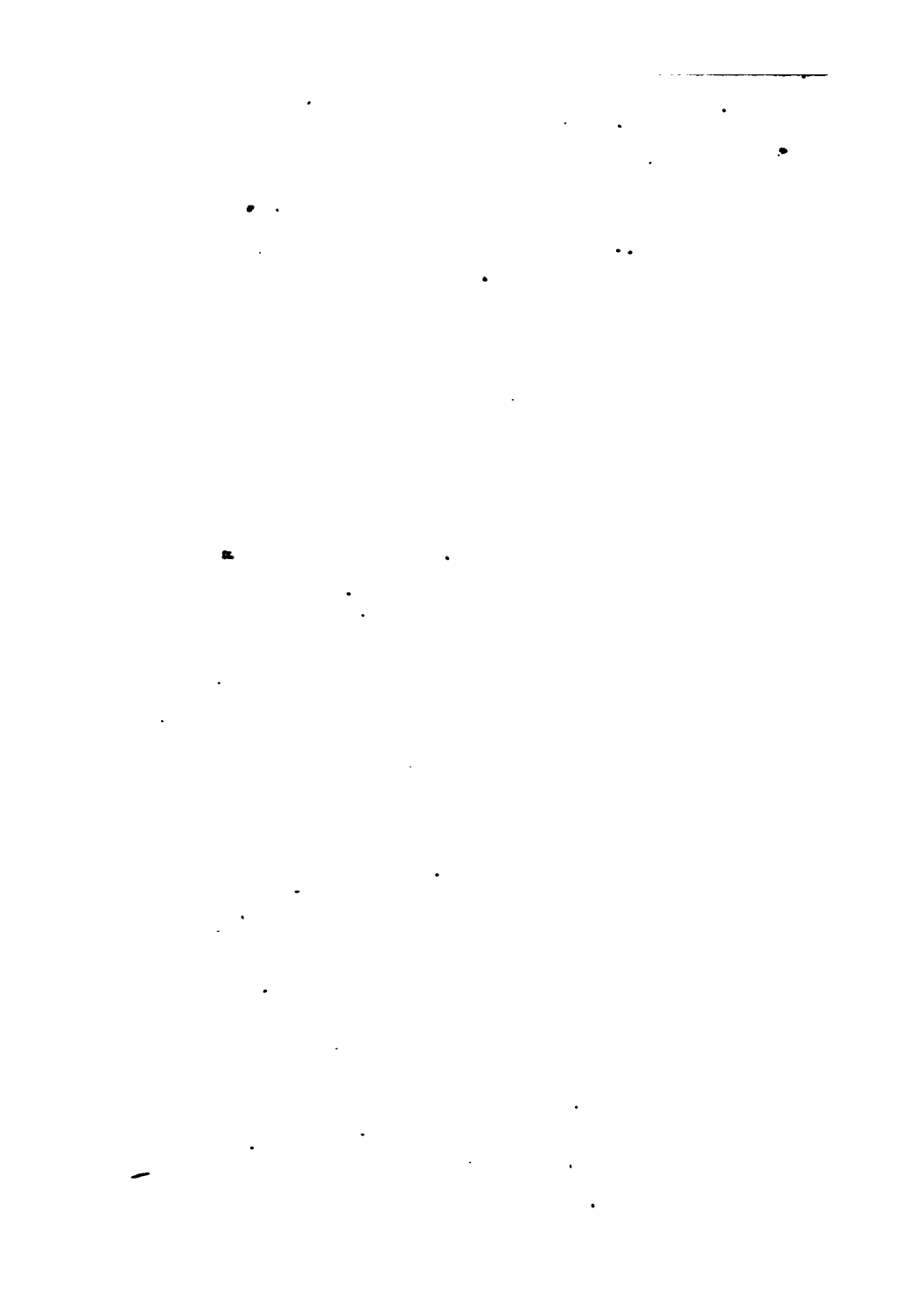
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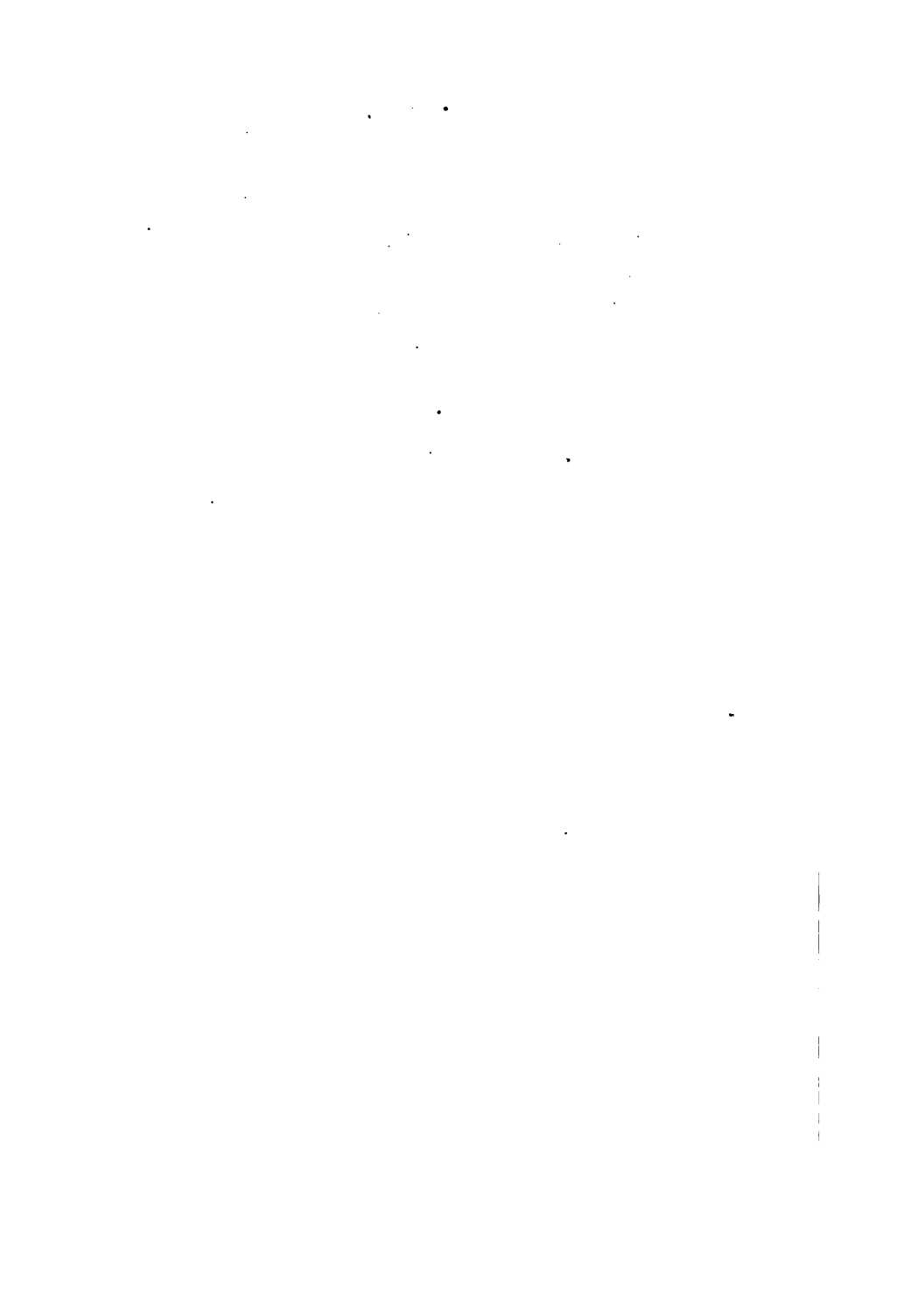
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## SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

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# SCRIPTURE HISTORY,

DESIGNED FOR

THE USE OF YOUNG PERSONS;

CONTAINING THE

HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES FROM THE CALL OF

ABRAHAM,

TO THE BUILDING OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE:

CHIEFLY IN THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE.

BY

CATHARINE IRENE FINCH:

AUTHOR OF "LOOK FORWARD," &c.



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## PREFACE.

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THE design of the present work is to place in the hands of children and young persons, a full and connected history of the Israelites, from the origin of their nation, in the person of Abraham, to the Building of Solomon's Temple.

The events of this period are related in the order of their occurrence, and chiefly in the words of the Bible; to which are occasionally added explanations of Scriptural expressions not easily understood by children, notices of the manners and customs of that age, or of those which now prevail in the East, together with a few reflections and remarks, such as naturally suggest themselves to the general reader, and may be beneficially impressed upon the minds of children. Difficult and disputed points of criticism, which mostly regard questions of minor importance, have been carefully avoided in the text: for a judicious teacher will be cautious of needlessly chilling with doubts the confiding faith of childhood; a credulous belief will learn discrimination by the lessons of experience, and the teachings of an enlightened reason; but the evils arising from a doubting and captious spirit early instilled, are not so easily eradicated, and often present an insuperable bar to future progress and happiness. There are, indeed, some few points of critical investigation which unavoidably present themselves, and which, the writer knows by experience, will not pass unnoticed by an intelligent child: these therefore are stated, and the opinions of some few commentators given, to enable the parent or the teacher to explain the question to the young reader, and form their own opinion by a reference to those writers who have treated of the subject.

The portions of Scripture selected in the present work, are strictly continuous in order of time. The writer cannot but

regret the very generally prevailing method of teaching Sacred History in small detached portions, without regard to their connexion with the general history of the Hebrew people. In this manner, a number of striking and interesting facts are, indeed, stored up in the mind, but the real value of these facts is not understood; nor can they be justly estimated apart from the times in which they occurred, and from the peculiar character of the dispensation under which they took place. Meanwhile, a true knowledge of the Israelites as a people is not gained; and yet what ancient nation presents annals so replete with instruction? No parent would be satisfied with giving his child a knowledge of the Grecian or Roman history, by only instructing him in the anecdotes and stories of their remarkable men, and relating even these without regard to the time of their occurrence. Yet do we not frequently see the history of the Israelites, (the chosen people, whose laws and institutions were given them by the Almighty,) read in this manner, and the knowledge so gained considered sufficient? And is not this laying the foundation of those superficial reasonings and crude objections, that are ever ready to arise in a mind which is thus only partially, while it believes itself to be wholly, enlightened?

It may be objected that every part of the Old Testament is not adapted for children, and that some portions are more suitable than others to make a beneficial impression upon their minds. This is no doubt the case: but it does not prevent those portions which are suitable from being presented to them in regular succession, and the separate facts being thus united into one continued and interesting history. When this first impression has been made, and the whole clearly understood, and (so far as the age of the reader allows) appreciated, select portions will be re-perused with equal pleasure, and far more advantage.

In offering to parents and teachers a volume of Scripture History written upon the plan above mentioned, the writer is deeply sensible of the difficulty of her task: but, having frequently heard it regretted that there were few books of the

kind suitable for children, and having herself experienced the want of such a work, she has been induced to make an attempt, which, should it not be approved, she hopes will lead those who are better qualified to undertake the task.

It remains to state that the few historical and critical notices interspersed throughout the work, are taken from well known and chiefly modern authors, easily accessible to the English reader. As it was not found desirable to interrupt the narrative by giving verbal quotations and distinct references upon every subject, it is hoped that it will be regarded as a sufficient acknowledgment to name the principal authors which have been consulted; and the reader is requested to refer to them upon any question which should not appear satisfactorily explained. The following are the principal works to which the writer has had recourse:

*Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews*, translated by Whiston; *Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Mr. Taylor; *Mœurs des Israelites et des Chrétiens*, par M. l'Abbé Fleury; *Jahn's History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*, and *Jahn's Biblical Antiquities*, Ward's edition—Burckhardt, and Laborde have been consulted for the geography of Arabia, and the sites of the resting places of the Israelites in their journey through the Desert; while the writer has derived great assistance from the interesting and elaborate notes in the Pictorial Bible: likewise from the *History of the Jews* in the Family Library, though from some passages and inferences in that valuable work she must respectfully express her dissent. The wood cuts of the Tabernacle, Altars, &c., are taken, with some slight alteration, from *Calmet's Dictionary of the Bible*, translated from the French, folio edition, 1683.

With regard to the portions of the history selected from the Old Testament, the passages marked by inverted commas are transcribed in the words of the Received Version. When it was not thought desirable to give a continued passage, the inverted commas are frequently altogether omitted: but the beautiful language of the Sacred Writers has been very generally preserved even in these passages, as will be found upon com-

paring the text with the account delivered in the Old Testament, the references to which are annexed to each chapter in the Table of Contents.

The writer cannot conclude without expressing the deep obligation she is under to the kindness of a learned friend, who has carefully perused and revised her manuscript, and with the support of whose valuable opinion she ventures to offer her present work to parents; earnestly hoping that it may excite the interest of young persons, and assist them in studying the history of the Hebrew people.

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Should this portion of Scripture history meet with approbation, it will be continued through the remaining historical books of the Old Testament, and brought down to the Christian era.

Edgbaston, March 27th, 1846.

## INTRODUCTION.

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THE history of the Israelites, given in the simple and beautiful narrative of the sacred writers, begins with the life of Abraham, who is emphatically styled the father or founder of the Hebrew nation. From this great patriarch the Israelites were lineally descended, and to him those promises were first addressed, which marked them out as a people peculiarly devoted to the worship of the True and Only God. Their history therefore, as a nation, properly commences with the call of Abraham; that is, with his being separated from his kindred, and chosen by the Divine Being to be the ancestor of a people, destined to keep alive among men a pure and holy religion, uncorrupted by the idolatrous practices then fast overspreading the world. The promises made to Abraham were renewed, at intervals, to succeeding patriarchs, who were taught to consider themselves as belonging to a distinct and chosen race, from whom was



to descend, the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. The land of Canaan was also to be theirs, though at that time peopled with nations more powerful than they, the measure of whose wickedness at a distant period would be filled up, and who would be destroyed on that account; it being expressly declared that the land was taken from the Canaanites as a punishment for their crimes, and not for the purpose of giving a country to the Israelites.

Four hundred years after these promises were made, the descendants of Abraham who had fallen into bondage in Egypt, were delivered from their miserable condition, by a series of miracles, and were thence led by Moses to Mount Sinai, where they received a code of laws from God, and were henceforward taken under His immediate government. The natural character of the Israelites was not, however, altered by any miraculous interposition: they were self-willed, and easily and strongly excited by present pain and pleasure: they were, in fact, 'children in character, though men in stature,' and such they long remained: to this first stage of the human mind, the dispensation under which they were placed was wisely and mercifully adapted. Their laws were exact, clear, and

even minute, and admitted of no evasion: if they obeyed them, they prospered and were happy;—if they disobeyed them, severe and frequently instant punishment followed. Obedience was their only duty, and the reward of performing that duty was given them in this world. To apply general precepts to the direction of their daily conduct, and to look for their reward in a life beyond the present, was an exertion of mental and moral power of which the Israelites were evidently incapable. This should be carefully kept in view while tracing the progress of their history, as it renders many events instructive which might be regarded as unimportant, except as bearing upon this one supreme duty of exact and unhesitating obedience.

There are two other circumstances which require attentive consideration in following the history of the Israelites; namely, the peculiar nature of their situation as the chosen people of God, and the manners and customs being different in that early age and eastern clime, from those which prevail in more modern times and in a colder region, with which we are too apt to compare them. Young persons especially are led into this error, as they usually read the history of the

Israelites, before becoming acquainted with any other; and consequently they compare what they read only with what they see and hear around them. It will easily be perceived how many errors must arise from a view so contracted, and so false: while the interest and beauty of the narrative is weakened, if not entirely destroyed. With regard to the conduct of the patriarchs and the leaders of the Israelites in after times, they were in some instances expressly commanded to perform certain actions, and to abstain from performing others. Where this is the case, their conduct is above our scrutiny; when the Will of God is declared, Man has only to reverence it and obey. It is true that in many instances we may understand the wisdom and mercy of the Divine commands, but in some cases it is very possible that we may not: for we are human beings, who see but in part, and that darkly, and how should we understand God, whose wisdom is unsearchable—whose goodness ‘is past finding out?’ Let us then bow with humility to His appointments, confide in His all perfect wisdom, and acknowledge our own ignorance and weakness.

The patriarchs were not, however, divinely directed in every action of their lives: they were

frail beings like ourselves, liable to err, and free to choose between good and evil. Thus their character is often mixed, and the truth and simplicity with which their faults and virtues are portrayed, is one of the strongest internal evidences of the authenticity of the Scriptures. But, in judging of their actions, we should endeavour to place ourselves in their age and country, and bring their conduct to the test, not of Christianity, but of the rules of moral obligation then acknowledged and practised; modified, indeed, and in some cases altered by the superior advantages which they enjoyed. To judge the Israelites by our standard of Christian excellence, is obviously unjust. Their virtues and vices were those of men in the childhood of existence. Taught by revelations from God, they were appointed to set an example to the nations around of purity of worship, and a corresponding purity of life. The LORD their God was one Lord,—a God of justice, mercy, and truth—this was their sublime faith, opposed to the polytheism of the ancient world: this great truth they were to hold sacred; and for that purpose they lived a distinct and chosen people—for that they underwent the discipline of trial and suffering—and for that they received, and, on

their restoration, according to the sure word of prophecy, will again receive the blessing of their God.

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**THE FIRST PERIOD.**

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**FROM THE CALL OF ABRAHAM,**

**TO •**

**THE ISRAELITES GOING TO LIVE IN EGYPT.**

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**Genesis, from ch. xii. to the end.**



## THE FIRST PERIOD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### ABRAM CALLED TO CANAAN FROM UR IN CHALDEA.

THE history of the Israelites as a distinct people, commences with the life of their great ancestor, Abraham. Nine generations had succeeded each other since the flood; and the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japhet were widely dispersed over the world, where already the knowledge of the true God was nearly lost, and the people were gradually becoming idolatrous, and, in some countries, extremely wicked. At this time, it pleased God to reveal himself to one good man, and, after trying his faith and obedience, to make him the father of a people who should preserve the knowledge of himself in the world. This good man was Abram, the son of Terah, and the tenth in descent from Noah. Abram and his father Terah lived at Ur in Chaldea,\* whence they

\* *Chaldea*—A country to the north of Babylon, but by some commentators the Chaldea here mentioned is thought to have been another Chaldea situate considerably to the east of the Tigris, on the borders of India, and consequently farther removed from Haran, to which Terah and his family journeyed.



departed in obedience to the command of God, in order to avoid the idolatry of the people there. They journeyed on to Haran, or Charan,\* a city in Mesopotamia, and here Terah settled; but Abram was commanded not to rest there, but to leave his family and kindred, and go a stranger into another land.

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee; And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Gen. xii. 1, 10. Acts vii. 2, 6.

“So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”

Lot was Abram’s nephew, being the son of his brother Haran, who was dead. Abram had another brother, whose name was Nahor, who remained at Haran with his father, and whose descendants are afterwards mentioned in the

The usual opinion in the East is that Ur is the same as the modern city of Orfah; (anciently Edessa) hither pilgrims resort, and the Mahometans have erected a handsome mosque in honour of the birth-place of Abraham. See *Calmet*.

\* *Charan*—Called afterwards *Charræ*, celebrated for the defeat of the Roman general *Crassus*.

sacred history. Abram with his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot, set out for the country of Canaan, trusting in God, and relying upon His Almighty care for protection. His wealth consisted of numerous flocks and herds, a large household of servants, or more properly slaves, besides silver and gold, so that Abram's encampment resembled that of an Arab Sheik of the present day. He was rich, according to the estimation of riches in that age, and we shall find him regarded as "a mighty prince" by the inhabitants of Canaan, and able to lead out more than three hundred men, "born in his household," to go to the rescue of Lot.

With regard to the slaves, it is necessary to remark, that though free servants were unknown in that age, and those who are called servants in the Scriptures mean servants who were in fact the property of their masters, yet they were not an unhappy, degraded race, such as the slaves of the present day. Their servitude was extremely light, and they were treated with great kindness and affection: they formed an important part of their master's family; and the attachment on both sides was often so strong as to resemble that of parent and child, rather than master and servant. Attended by a numerous train of these faithful servants, with their families, and with large herds of cattle and sheep, Abram, in obedience to the Divine command, left his father's house, and commenced his journey towards Canaan. Here he first rested at Sichem,

a place between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, afterwards famous in the Jewish history as the scene of many remarkable events.\*

At Sichem the Lord again appeared unto Abram, and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land:" At this time Abram was a stranger in Canaan, and possessed not a single foot of ground in it: yet he firmly believed in God, and knew that He would do according to His promise, however impossible it might seem to any human power to accomplish it. His faith was 'accounted unto him for righteousness,' and his obedience rewarded with the favor and blessing of the Almighty.

A famine in the land of Canaan obliged Abram to go down into Egypt, which was even then remarkable for its fertility, and the great quantity of corn it produced. Most of the nations round led a pastoral life, that is, they tended cattle, and only grew a small quantity of corn, sufficient for their own consumption; whereas the Egyptians devoted themselves more especially to the cultivation of the soil, and their land was the greatest corn country in the ancient world. Hither Abram went, and resided during the continuance of the famine; he then returned to

\* Sichem, Shechem, or Sychar—the modern name is Naplous, or Neapolis. Here was the tomb of Joseph, the remains of which are still to be seen; also the tomb of Joshua. After the destruction of Samaria, Shechem became the capital of the Samaritans, and at Jacob's well, in its immediate neighbourhood, Our Lord held his discourse with the woman of Samaria.

Romans iv. 3. Gal. iii. 6.

Canaan, and settled at Bethel, a place he had formerly visited, and in which he had erected an altar to the LORD; here he again offered a sacrifice, to express his gratitude to God, for his safe return.

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## CHAPTER II.

### LOT GOES TO SODOM. SODOM AND GOMORRAH DESTROYED.

AT Bethel disputes arose between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot. There was great difficulty in finding water and pasturage for their numerous herds, and Abram's conduct on this occasion affords a beautiful example of moderation and kindness, which we should do well to imitate. If differences were adjusted in this spirit, quarrels between kindred and friends would seldom occur.

"And Lot also which went with Abram had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdsmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle."

“And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen, and thy herdsmen: for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the left.”

Lot chose the valley along which the river Jordan flowed. It was well watered and fertile, but the people in it were wicked: still Lot resolved to go there, so he left Abram, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

It would have been better to have chosen a part of the country where the people were not so wicked, even if it had not been equally fertile and pleasant, since persons are always strongly tempted to do the same as they see others doing around them; and we can scarcely imagine a really good man placing himself by choice amongst a people who were notorious for their crimes. But Lot sought only to live at ease in a fruitful country, not to go where he could serve God best: and by thus putting pleasure before duty he failed, as people usually do, in obtaining the happiness he expected. He had not been long at Sodom before Chedorlaomer and three other neighbouring kings made war upon the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and conquered them. For twelve years they remained tributary to Chedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they revolted; upon which he

came with an army, and after defeating the king of Sodom and his allies in a pitched battle, retreated towards his own country, carrying away Lot and his family. As soon as Abram heard of the capture of Lot, he hastily assembled three hundred and eighteen of his servants, all born in his house, and able to go out to war. With these he pursued after Chedorlaomer, and overtook him at Dan, a town to the north of Canaan. Attacking him by night, after drawing his force into two parts, he completely defeated him, and thus succeeded in rescuing Lot, and getting back all the spoil which had been seized.

As Abram returned, he came to Salem. "And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessing heaven and earth; And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And Abram gave him tithes\* of all." Gen. xiv. 18, 20.

When Abram brought back the people and the spoil, the king of Sodom wished him to keep the goods, as a reward for the toil and danger he had incurred, but this Abram generously refused; he desired that the princes round who had accompanied him might have a share of the spoil, but for himself and his servants he declined accepting any recompense.

\* i. e. The tenth part.

After Lot's departure, Abram was commanded to walk through the land, in the length of it, and breadth of it, to see the extent of the country his seed should possess; after which he went and dwelt in the plains of Mamre.

Abram was prosperous and happy, for the blessing of the Almighty was upon him; but he had one grief, his wife Sarai had no child. God had declared that the land he lived in should belong to his descendants, and he believed therefore that he should be the ancestor of a great nation; but he had as yet no son except Ishmael; now Ishmael was the son of Hagar, another wife of Abram's, but of inferior rank to Sarai. It was the custom at that time, and is still in some countries, for a man to have more than one wife; but the children of the inferior wives did not usually inherit their father's property.

When Abram was nearly a hundred years old, the Lord again renewed His promise that his seed should be multiplied, and that he should be the father of many nations. And God changed Abram's name to Abraham, which signifies *the father of a great multitude, or, of many nations*, and Sarai's name was changed to Sarah.

Not long after these promises had been renewed, as Abraham was one day seated in the shade at the door of his tent, he saw three strangers standing near him. He immediately hastened to meet them, and requested them to rest during the heat, and refresh themselves. "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and

wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on; for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, so do as thou hast said."

"And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth."

"And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man, and he hasted to dress it."

"And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat."

The customs of the Arabs of the present day very much resemble those here described. A stranger is always hospitably received, and it is a mark of respect to go forth to meet him. Water is first given him to wash his feet, which is particularly needed after walking across the sandy plains of the desert, and then food is set before him. This consists of cakes hastily baked, milk, and butter; and if the Arab chief is rich, and wishes to treat his guest with peculiar hospitality, a kid or lamb is killed, and served up. This is however an unusual honor, as animal food is not dressed excepting on great occasions. Neither is bread kept ready made; it would not be good long in so hot a climate. The women of the highest rank pre-



pare the various dishes, as Sarah did, and like her, the wife of the Shiek of the tribe does not consider it any degradation, but rather esteems it an honor, to make ready the meals of the husband and his guests.

When the angels, for such they were, had partaken of Abraham's entertainment, they said unto him, "where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent;" the tent was near the oak, under whose shade they were seated, and within hearing. One of the three then declared that in the following year Sarah should have a son. When Sarah heard this, she laughed within herself, for she had not faith like Abraham. But he who spoke was not an earthly being, and he knew that she disbelieved, and he reproved her. Then she was afraid, and she denied, and said, "I laughed not." But he said to her, "nay, but thou didst laugh."

"And the men rose up from thence and looked towards Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on their way." Then the Lord spoke to Abraham and told him that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were going to be destroyed because of their great and grievous wickedness.

"And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to

slay the righteous with the wicked : and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

"And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes : Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous ; wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?"

"And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it."

"And he spake unto him yet again, and said : Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake."

"And he said unto him, oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak : Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it if I find thirty there."

"And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD : Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake."

And Abraham said, "oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once : Peradventure ten should be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

But there were not ten righteous men in the whole city, and Sodom was to be destroyed.

The angels who had visited Abraham, went on to Sodom ; they found Lot, and told him the city would be destroyed, but that he and his family should be saved. The following morning they took him and his wife, and his two daughters, and commanded them to make all haste and quit the city, lest they should be consumed ; and on no account to linger and look back. But Lot's wife disobeyed the command of the angels ; she looked back, and became a pillar of salt.

"Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven : And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain,\* and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

"And Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord : And he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and behold, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

"And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt."

We hear little more of Lot ; he evidently was a very inferior character to Abraham, and did

\* The whole plain is highly bituminous, and still bears marks of the violent convulsion which is here recorded.

not seek to please God first in every thing he did ; although he might not be an idolater, nor given up to wickedness like the nations round.

The destruction of Sodom and the other cities, produced a lake or inland sea, about seventy miles long : it has gone by various names, such as the Dead Sea, the Salt Sea, or Lake Asphaltites. It is remarkable for the excessive saltness of its waters, which prevents fish from living in it, and plants from growing near its borders. It is also said that the water has a petrifying quality, and that small branches of plants thrown into it soon become petrified.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### ISAAC BORN. ABRAHAM OFFERS ISAAC.

ABRAHAM'S faith was now rewarded by his wife Sarah having a son : This was a source of great happiness to Abraham, but he had still a cause of uneasiness. Ishmael was fourteen years old when Isaac was born, and, as he had till then been brought up as the only son and expected heir of Abraham, he and his mother Hagar did not willingly give place to Isaac. About three years after, Sarah asked Abraham

to send away Hagar and her son, but Abraham refused, until commanded by God to do so. God promised it should be well with Ishmael, and that he should likewise become the founder of a great nation; but he was not to remain with Isaac, not inheriting the same promises.

By sending Ishmael away, dissention and unkindness in the family were prevented, while the future happiness of Ishmael was amply provided for, and a higher destiny opened for him, than could (humanly speaking) have awaited him in the house of his father. Hagar was accordingly provided with a bottle of water and some bread, the only provisions necessary in that country for a journey, and she and her son were sent away. They were probably directed to go to some friendly tribe near, but this we are not told. In the wilderness of Beersheba, they suffered dreadfully from thirst. The water they had brought with them was gone, and they saw none in the desert. What were they to do? Ishmael lay down under a tree, too much exhausted to continue his journey, and his mother "sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice and wept."

"And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is; Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him

in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water, and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

The Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael. When Hagar was told of the future destiny of her son, it was declared that he should be 'a wild man; whose hand would be against every man, and every man's hand against him.' This is most strikingly the characteristic of the Arabs even now, particularly the Bedouin Arabs, whose descent from Ishmael is the best attested. They live in the deserts, in tents, despising and hating the manners of civilized life, and scarcely ever dwelling in towns. They enjoy the wild free life of the desert, and are always at war, either with some neighbouring tribe, or with strangers. They are the terror of all travellers, for their hand is against every one who is not very powerfully protected, and they continue the same way of life, from generation to generation, while their domestic manners as described by modern travellers, differ little from those which we find recorded in many parts of the Bible, particularly in the lives of the patriarchs.

Abraham had shown his faith in God and his obedience to the divine commands on many trying occasions; but his faith was to be proved yet farther. His son Isaac whom he loved with

so much tenderness, and who was dearer to him than any earthly treasure he possessed—would he part with him at the command of God? This trial now awaited him.

When Isaac was grown up, God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."\*

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him."

"Then on the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together."

"And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said, My father, and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

\* The hill of Moriah, was one of the four hills upon which the city of Jerusalem afterwards stood. The splendid Temple of Solomon was erected on this mountain.

“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering; so they went both of them together.”

“And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.”

“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up as a burnt offering in the stead of his son.”

“And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand upon the sea shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies. And in thy seed shall all the nation of



the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

This was the last trial of the faith of Abraham. Let us try to imitate this great and good patriarch, and be ready like him to give up without a murmur any happiness which God sees fit to take from us. Even children should learn to submit cheerfully to disappointments; they should recollect that the very smallest circumstance is known to God, and that he will be pleased if they try to bear patiently the little trials which he sends them.

Some years after the offering of Isaac, Sarah died at Kirjath-arba, or Hebron. Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah, to serve as a burying place for her, and for his family. It was the custom in many ancient countries to hollow chambers out of the rock, and place the dead in them. Sometimes the bodies, after being embalmed, were laid in stone coffins, and placed in niches round the walls of these large subterraneous chambers, and this seems to have been the usual manner of burying distinguished persons in Canaan: the common people were interred. In Egypt the dead were embalmed, and the mummies, as the bodies were then called, were placed either standing upright, or lying in niches over each other, along the sides of galleries made under ground; these galleries often extended for many miles. We shall find that the bodies of Jacob and Joseph were embalmed, after the manner of the Egyptians, though they

were brought out of Egypt, and buried in the land of Canaan.

NOTE — For an interesting account of the funeral rites of the Jews, and their public mourning and fasts see, Abbé Fleury's work entitled '*Mœurs des Israelites et des Chrétiens.*'

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ISAAC MARRIES REBEKAH. ABRAHAM DIES.

ABRAHAM had a faithful steward over his household, the eldest servant in his house, in whom he had entire confidence: And he commanded him to take presents, and go to Haran, the country of his kindred, and bring from thence a wife for his son Isaac: the Canaanitish nations being idolatrous, Abraham desired that his son should not take a wife from among them. And Abraham said to his servant, "The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land, He shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."

The servant took an oath that he would faithfully execute his master's commands, and imme-

diately set out with ten camels, and attended by a train fitted to conduct with honour the bride of his master's son. When he arrived, after a long journey, near the city of Haran, he made his camels kneel down to rest by a well of water which was there : and it was the time of evening, when it was usual for the women of the city to come out to draw water. And he prayed to God, and said,

“ O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well of water ; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water : And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink ; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also ; Let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac ? and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master.”

The prayer of the faithful servant was hardly ended, when Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came forth, with her pitcher on her shoulder, to draw water. This was the common custom in that age, however singular it may appear to us now. And the damsel was very fair to look upon ; and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher and came up. “ And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said drink, my lord ;

and she hasted and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink."

"And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking. And she hasted and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not."

When the camels had finished drinking, the steward presented Rebekah with an ear-ring, and two bracelets of gold. It is still the custom in the East to offer presents to every person to whom it is wished to show respect; in some cases it is considered an insult not to bring a present, and if a person is too poor to give anything else, a handful of meal or barley, or the commonest fruit, will be offered and accepted.

The servant then asked Rebekah, whose daughter she was, "and whether there was room in her father's house for him to lodge." She answered that she was the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Nahor, and that they had straw and provender enough, and room to lodge him.

"And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and of his truth; I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren."

Rebekah hastened and told those of her mo-

dience, because we enjoy the blessing of knowing for certain that God exists, "and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." But in the time of Abraham, this great truth was not so clearly known; and as it is easier, in the hour of temptation, to yield to our evil dispositions than to resist and conquer them, the people of that age who lived without the fear of God, were often guilty of great crimes. Idolatry, too, was beginning to prevail, which led the way to many vices, and to dreadful acts of superstitious cruelty. Yet, whilst living in the midst of so much evil, Abraham's faith and virtue remained true, and unchanged. "Against hope he believed in hope," and was ready to obey God even at the sacrifice (if required) of all that made life dear to him.

Two of the oldest and most remarkable nations in the world, the Jews and the Arabs, are descended from Abraham: his memory is superstitiously venerated to this day, in the East; and the Arabs have adorned his history with many fanciful traditions.\*

Rom. iv. 18.

\* Amongst others, they pretend that the temple of Mecca, called the Kaaba, whither Musselmén from all countries resort in pilgrimage, was rebuilt by Abraham, after the flood; and the sacred well "Zemzem," within its court, they believe to be the spring which supplied Hagar and Ishmael in the desert of Beer-sheba!—See *Burckhardt's Travels in Arabia*, pages 98 and 163, quarto edition.

## CHAPTER V.

ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT. JACOB DECEIVES  
HIS FATHER.

THERE are no remarkable events recorded in the life of the patriarch Isaac after the death of his father; the promises made to Abraham were renewed to him, and he continued to live in the fear and worship of the One True God.

Isaac had two sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau the elder was red, and his skin was rough and hairy: he was "a cunning hunter," "a man of the field," while Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents.\* One day when Esau came in from hunting, weary and faint with hunger, he saw his brother Jacob preparing a mess of pottage: the pottage was made with lentiles,† and looked

\* The epithet "plain" is pre-eminently applicable to a man dwelling in tents, whatever be his rank or wealth. Speaking of the Bedouins, Burckhardt says, "the richest shiek lives like the meanest of his Arabs; they both eat every day of the same dishes, and in the same quantity, and never partake of any luxury except on the arrival of a stranger, when the host's tent is open to all his friends." *Notes to the Pictorial Bible*. The epithet here, however, more properly relates to the occupation of Jacob, than to his character, which was simple and uniform, unlike that of Esau which was more active and diversified.

† *Lentiles*, a kind of pulse resembling peas.

red, wherefore it is said, Esau's name was changed to Edom, which signifies "red," or "red man."

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright."

"And Esau said, Behold I am at the point to die; and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"

"And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him, and he sold his birthright unto Jacob."

"Then Jacob gave Esau bread, and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright."

This account presents a melancholy picture of cunning selfishness, and impetuous passion, which regards nothing but the gratification of the present moment. Both brothers acted ill. Esau's crime consisted in his not valuing, as he ought, his birthright, to which divine promises were attached. In that age the eldest son, or whichever son possessed the rights of the eldest, was the priest as well as the chief of the family: this sacred office Esau relinquished to his brother, not from affection to him, but because he could not bear a small amount of present suffering from hunger. He exaggerated this suffering, as persons who give way to their feelings are in the habit of doing, in order to excuse their weakness; but we are not therefore to imagine that he was in danger of dying, though he might, no doubt, be faint and exhausted from want of food. No

person that does what is wrong, to avoid bearing pain, can be either good or great. The conduct of Jacob is equally deserving of blame. It was cruel and selfish to refuse to give his brother food, when he so much needed it; and it was crafty in him to take advantage of his exhausted state to induce him to sell his birth-right. Such treatment of a brother cannot be excused, but revolts every generous mind.

How striking is the simplicity and truth of this narrative, compared with the writings of profane historians!\* In these, the faults of heroes are glossed over, or commended as virtues: but in the Sacred Scriptures, errors and vices are recorded with the same fidelity as the highest virtues; the one for our warning, the other for our imitation.

When Esau was forty years old, he married two wives of the Canaanitish nation, and, by this act, appears to have cut himself off from the peculiar blessings promised to the descendants of Abraham, which depended upon their keeping themselves separate from idolaters. Esau's marriage was a heavy grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

The next circumstance related in the history of Jacob, presents again an unfavourable view of his character.

“And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not

\* By Profane historians, we mean all historians except those which record the Scripture Histories; ‘profane’ in this sense meaning only, ‘not sacred.’



see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son; and Esau\* said unto him, Behold, here am I. And Isaac said, Behold, now, I am old, I know not the day of my death. Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison. And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat: that my soul may bless thee before I die."

The blessing given by Isaac, and that given afterwards by Jacob, were both pronounced under divine influence, and foretold the future destiny of the children, and their descendants. It is evident that such blessings could only be bestowed by the express permission of God, who alone can know what future events will happen to mankind.

When Rebekah heard what Isaac said, she resolved to prevent his giving his blessing to Esau, and secure it to her favourite son, Jacob, by deceiving his father, while Esau was gone into the field to hunt the venison. She desired Jacob to bring her two kids, that she might make savoury meat for Isaac; and then Jacob should go in with it, and receive his father's blessing instead of Esau. But Jacob was afraid, and said to his mother, "Behold Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to

\* The proper name is substituted for the pronoun, here and in some other places.

him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing."

Still Rebekah persisted in her purpose, and desired Jacob to fetch the kids; and when he had brought them, she made savoury meat, and put the skins of the goats upon Jacob's hands and neck, in order that if Isaac should feel him, he might seem to be rough and hairy like his brother: she also put on him goodly raiment belonging to Esau, and when this was done, Jacob took the meat to his father.\*

"And Jacob came unto his father, and said, My father; And he said, here am I: who art thou, my son? And Jacob said unto his father, "I am Esau thy first-born; I have done according as thou badst me; arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me."

"And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? And he said, because the Lord thy God brought it to me."

We here see how one fault leads on to another: when Jacob first consented to deceive his father, he probably thought he should only tell one lie; but he told many, and even dared

\* The common prints of this scene represent Isaac in a European bed, which is incorrect. In the East the bed is the same as the divan, a raised seat, covered with cushions at one end of the tent, or apartment, on which the men recline during the day, and sleep at night, with the addition of a rug or blanket for a covering, the nights being often extremely cold.

to make use of the hallowed name of God, to cover his wicked deceit. But Isaac was not convinced, and he said to Jacob, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not."

"And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau. And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him. And he said, Art thou my very son Esau? And he said, I am."

"And Isaac said, bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And Jacob brought it near to him and he did eat; and he brought him wine, and he drank."

"And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him; and Isaac smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.\*

"Therefore, God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; Let people serve thee, and

\* The parched herbage of the deserts and uncultivated plains is often exceedingly fragrant, and may well have imparted its odour to the garments of Esau, "a man of the field." Perhaps his clothes were actually perfumed. The Orientals are proverbially fond of perfumes.—*Notes to the Pictorial Bible.*

The Scottish heather is also well known to impart a peculiar fragrance to the linen which has been bleached or dried upon it.

nations bow down to thee, be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee; cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." \*

"And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me."

"And Isaac his father said unto him, who art thou? And Esau said, I am thy son, thy first born, Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and I have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.\*

\* It is perfectly clear that a prophetic blessing like this, and the one bestowed on Esau, could only be given by the Spirit of God inspiring the Patriarch to pronounce them; consequently, as that Divine Spirit could not be deceived, it was not, in reality, the *deceit* of Jacob which gained the blessing, but he was destined to receive it; and, therefore, would have received it, even had he taken no wicked means to obtain it: Esau had forfeited it by slighting its promises, and by marrying idolatrous wives. It is necessary that young persons should clearly understand the difference between these divine Blessings, or Promises of future greatness, bestowed successively on the Patriarchs, and on some of the Judges and Kings, which Blessings refer to external and national prosperity and success, or, to the future advent of the Messiah—it is necessary, we repeat, to

"And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father."

"And Isaac said, thy brother came with subtilty and hath taken away thy blessing. And Esau said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times; he took away my birthright, and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?"

"And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained

separate in their minds these prophetic promises, mostly relating to the descendants, from a blessing, or promise of individual, personal *happiness* and peace; 'that peace which the world can neither give nor take away,' and, which is left, in the Old Testament as in the New, to depend upon virtue alone, and is the reward of an approving conscience. Thus, in the instance of Jacob, he received the *national* blessing, because, with all his faults which were great, he was never given to idolatry; and it was to keep one people free from idolatry, and true to the pure worship of Jehovah, that the Israelites were chosen out, and had peculiar privileges; therefore, this blessing Jacob received, and not Esau: but the blessing of happiness and peace, he did not receive, but reaped the natural reward of his deceit. He was first obliged to leave his home, he was then deceived by Laban, and oppressed many years, he met his injured brother with dread and distrust, his own children deceived him, as he had deceived his father Isaac, he lost for years his favourite son, and, in fine, he himself bewails his many afflictions, and confesses to Pharoah at the close of his life, that "his years had been few and evil." Can we consider all this, and for one moment think that he gained happiness, or the divine approbation by his deceit?

him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept."

"And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth and of the dew of heaven from above: And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck."\*

Esau's blessing was exactly fulfilled, as well as Jacob's, as will be seen in a future part of the history. There is no doubt that as these blessings were given by inspiration from God, it was ordained that the descendants of Jacob should inherit the promises made to Abraham; and, therefore, we are not to think that Jacob gained the birthright by his wicked deceit, nor did Esau lose his inheritance in consequence of his brother's artifice, but forfeited it by taking wives from the Canaanites. So far from

\* The only palliation of the conduct of Rebekah on this occasion is the suggestion offered by Josephus, namely that she was aware (which she certainly was) of the divine promise in favor of Jacob, and thought it wrong that Isaac should disregard it, and from undue partiality to Esau endeavour to give him the birthright, which she considered as belonging to Jacob. Had she rested in faithful reliance on God's promise, that promise would still have been accomplished, and she and her son saved from the sin of deceit and falsehood.

gaining by his deceit, Jacob suffered in consequence of it for more than twenty years, and must often have bitterly repented of his ill conduct.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### JACOB GOES TO LABAN. JACOB'S DREAM.

ESAU was angry with his brother for having defrauded him, (as he considered he had) of his birthright, and he threatened to kill him when his father Isaac should be dead. When Rebekah heard his threats against the life of Jacob, she resolved to send Jacob away; and she persuaded Isaac to let him go to his uncle Laban, the brother of Rebekah, in order that he might marry a wife from their own family. This was the first ill consequence of Jacob's fault; he was forced to leave his home; and his mother, who had urged him to deceive his aged father, was obliged to part with her son, and never saw him again.\* Thus were both punished for their deceit.

\* Rebekah is not mentioned as being alive at the return of Jacob, but the exact date of her death is unknown. She died before Isaac.

Jacob, being forced to quit his country, set out on his journey to Haran. On the way he had a dream, in which he saw a ladder that appeared to reach to the heavens, and the angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. And God spoke to him, and renewed His promise that the descendants of Abraham should possess the land of Canaan, and that Jacob should himself be preserved in the strange land to which he was going, and should be brought back in safety. When Jacob awoke from this dream, he took the stone which had served him for a pillow, and set it up for a memorial of God's promise to him, and of his own resolution to remain true to the worship of Jehovah, during the whole of his life. He called the name of the place Bethel.

Jacob was at first kindly received by his uncle, and offered to serve him; but Laban refused, saying, though he was his nephew, yet should he not serve him for nothing, but he would give him wages. Then Jacob proposed, instead of receiving wages, to serve him seven years for his daughter Rachel. To this Laban willingly consented. So Jacob served Laban faithfully seven years; but when the time was ended, and Jacob expected to have Rachel, Laban gave him Leah, Rachel's eldest sister, declaring that it was contrary to their customs for a younger sister to be married before the elder, and that Jacob must serve another seven years for Rachel. Thus was Jacob deceived by his uncle



Laban, as he had himself deceived his father Isaac.

Jacob served another seven years for Rachel, and, after that, received payment for his services in cattle. He agreed with Laban that all the cattle and sheep of a certain color should be his; but when there were many of that color, Laban changed it, and fixed another: in this manner he changed Jacob's wages ten times. This was unjust in Laban, "but God suffered him not to hurt Jacob," who continued to prosper in his outward circumstances, and had numerous flocks and herds. At length, at the end of twenty years, Jacob became anxious to return to his own country; as the sons of Laban were become jealous of his prosperity, and Laban himself no longer regarded him with his former kindness.

Jacob therefore determined to go away, but without telling Laban, or his sons; he communicated his intention only to his wives Leah and Rachel, and they left secretly with all their cattle, while Laban was absent, and set forth on the road to Canaan.

Jacob had been gone three days before Laban knew of his departure: he then quickly pursued after him, and at the end of seven days overtook him in mount Gilead. Laban, no doubt, intended to force Jacob to return; but God appeared to Laban in a dream, and commanded him not to hurt Jacob, or dispute with him. Laban therefore met Jacob in a friendly manner, only reproaching him with having left secretly, so that

he could not dismiss him with honour, "with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp:" he charged him also with having stolen his 'gods.' These gods were small images, (probably made of some precious metal) which were highly prized by the superstitious people of those times. But Jacob did not value them, for he was a worshipper of the true God, nor did he know that his favorite wife Rachel had secretly carried them away from her father's house. On the contrary, he was angry with Laban for suspecting him of having stolen his images, and eagerly desired him to search his tents and baggage, and convince himself that they were not there. Laban accordingly began his search; but when he came to Rachel's tent, she sat down and concealed the images under her clothes, so that Laban could not discover them. After this fruitless attempt to recover his images, Laban entered into a covenant of peace with Jacob: they erected a pillar, which they agreed should be for a boundary between them, and neither should pass beyond it to injure the other. Laban then took an affectionate leave of his daughters and their children, and returned in peace to his own country.

## CHAPTER VII.

JACOB'S NAME CHANGED TO ISRAEL. THE  
MEETING OF ESAU AND JACOB.

AFTER parting with Laban, Jacob pursued his journey. He was now approaching the country of Seir, where his brother Esau had settled, and, as he justly feared his resentment, he sent messengers before to announce his coming, and to ascertain if his brother were kindly disposed towards him. The messengers soon returned, bringing intelligence that Esau was on the way to meet Jacob, "and four hundred men with him." On hearing this, "Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, if Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape." And Jacob prayed to God, and besought Him to deliver him from the hand of Esau, and bless him: and the following night God appeared to Jacob and blessed him. And God changed Jacob's name to Israel, which signifies that he "prevailed with God," to grant him a blessing: from hence his descendants were called Israelites, or the children of Israel.

Jacob had, we hope, repented ere this of his treacherous and deceitful conduct to his brother; he might only be influenced by fear, but whatever was his motive, he was anxious to meet his brother with every mark of affection and respect.\* We have before remarked, that it was customary in those times, and still is in many countries, to offer a present to any person to whom it is wished to show respect. Accordingly, Jacob selected a large number of goats and sheep, camels, cattle, and asses,† and sent them forwards by his servants, every drove separately: "and he commanded the foremost, saying, when Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's: it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and behold he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves."

\* Jacob appears to have sedulously shewn Esau those attentions considered to belong by right to an elder brother, and thus to endeavour to obliterate the remembrance of his having obtained the birthright from him. The handsome present which Jacob sends to propitiate his offended brother's favor, and the repeated salutations he makes in approaching him, are all in exact conformity with the present manners of the east, as related by modern travellers.

† Asses are frequently mentioned in the Bible as animals of great beauty and value: those of Europe are an inferior race both as to usefulness, beauty and size, being considerably smaller and less tractable and intelligent: to ride upon a white ass was a mark of great wealth and distinction.

Having sent forward his servants with these directions, Jacob arranged the rest of his band, placing his wives with their children last for greater security. And when he saw Esau coming, and with him four hundred men, he passed on before his wives and children, "and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother."

"And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept. And Esau lifted up his eyes, and saw the women and the children; and said, Who are those with thee? And Jacob said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant."

Then Jacob's wives and children approached and bowed down before Esau. And Esau said, "What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And Jacob said, These are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough, my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself." Jacob entreated Esau to accept of his present, as a proof of his kindness and reconciliation; then Esau consented to accept it, and he invited his brother to come with him, and offered to go before him, or to leave some of his people to attend him. But Jacob preferred going on alone, and the habits of the two brothers were so different that it was better they should live apart. There was a great mixture of fear and cowardice in Jacob's character; instead therefore, of simply and openly stating his wish

to travel on to Canaan, he requested his brother to depart for the land of Seir, promising to follow leisurely, on account of driving the cattle slowly, which were with him. Esau accordingly departed for Seir, when Jacob, instead of following him, turned off to Succoth, and journeyed from thence to Shechem.

There is something peculiarly generous and noble in Esau's reception of his brother. How entirely he appears to have forgiven his former injuries, and how affectionately and kindly does he receive him after his long absence, as though Jacob had never done him wrong! Jacob, who had *done* the wrong, was fearful and suspicious; while Esau, who had *suffered* the wrong, had forgotten it, and met his brother with no painful feelings of remorse. Let us consider which of these feelings is the better and happier, and strive to imitate the generous forgiveness of Esau, although we justly condemn his conduct in other respects.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ISAAC DIES. JACOB SETTLES AT HEBRON.

BEFORE leaving Shechem, Jacob piously resolved to purify his household from any pollution of idolatry which it might have imbibed: he commanded every image to be brought to him, even to the earrings, which were probably small images, and were perhaps regarded as charms by their superstitious wearers: when all were collected, Jacob buried them "under the oak which was by Shechem." Thus Rachel was justly deprived of those images, to obtain which she had been guilty of fraud and deceit towards her father! From Shechem Jacob went to Bethel, where he had had the dream which encouraged him to continue in the worship of the True God, whilst a sojourner in Haran: here he set up a pillar of stone, and poured a drink offering upon it, and here God again graciously renewed his promise to bless him, and to give the land of Canaan to his descendants. Soon after leaving Bethel, Rachel died, and was buried at Ephrath, or Bethlehem.

Jacob at length reached his father's house at Hebron. His mother appears to have been dead, but his aged father was still alive: here

Jacob finally settled: some years after, Isaac died,\* and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

We here subjoin the names of Jacob's twelve sons: it is important to remember them, as they and the two sons of Joseph, are the ancestors of the future tribes of Israel, which are called after their names:

REUBEN, SIMEON, LEVI, JUDAH, DAN,  
NAPHTALI, GAD, ASHER, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN,  
JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN.†

\* Isaac was 180 years old when he died; consequently his death did not take place till the year before Christ 1716, that is, twelve years after Joseph was sold into Egypt, and one year before he interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and the commencement of the seven years of plenty; his death is here recorded as following the order preserved in Genesis, by which arrangement interruption in the narrative is avoided, and the life of each patriarch is kept distinct.

† Joseph and Benjamin were the sons of Rachel: the rest were the children of Leah, and of two inferior wives.



## CHAPTER IX.

## JOSEPH'S DREAMS. JOSEPH SOLD INTO EGYPT.

"Now Israel (or Jacob) loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren, and they hated him yet the more."

"And Joseph said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo! my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf."

"And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

"And Joseph dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more, and behold the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said

unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying."

The dreams here recorded, and others which occur in the future history of Joseph, are very different from common dreams now. In the times of the Patriarchs, God frequently made known future events by dreams; and therefore we find that Jacob "observed the saying," although he blamed Joseph for boasting of his superiority to the rest of his family.

"And Joseph's brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said unto Joseph, Do thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said unto him, Here am I. And Jacob said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks: and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem."

"And a certain man found him; and behold, he was wandering in the field: and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou? And he said, I seek my brethren; tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks. And the man said, they are departed hence, for I heard them say, let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan."

"And when his brethren saw him afar off, even

before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh. Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams. And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, let us not kill him: and Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him: that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again."

"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it."

"And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes, and looked, and behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels, bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

"And Judah said unto his brethren, what profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites, merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph

to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver : and they brought Joseph into Egypt.\*

“And Reuben returned unto the pit ; and behold, Joseph was not in the pit ; and he rent his clothes.† And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not ; and I, whither shall I go ?”

“And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood. And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father ; and said, this, have we found ; know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no.”

“And Jacob knew it, and said, it is my son’s coat ; an evil beast hath devoured him : Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him ; but he refused to be comforted ; and he said, For I will go down unto the grave, unto my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him.”

“And the Midianites sold Joseph into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh’s, and captain of the guard.”

\* The company was apparently what is now styled a Caravan, composed of both Ishmaelites and Midianites ; spices, balm, and myrrh were much used in Egypt for embalming the dead.

† To rend or tear the clothes, was a customary mode of expressing grief, and still continues to be so in Persia and other Eastern countries.

In this sad history we see the dreadful consequences of family disunion and strife. Joseph's brethren were jealous of the preference which their father showed him, and Jacob was certainly wrong in showing this preference so strongly as he did; but this was no excuse for their conduct. Joseph was their brother, and they ought not to *have allowed themselves* to hate him. We can always conquer such bad feelings when we choose, for we know that we may pray to God, who will give us the strength we need, if we really strive ourselves. But we must begin at once, while our feelings are only *a little wrong*, or it will be too late. When bad feelings are indulged, they become stronger, until they lead us on to crimes we should once have deemed it impossible to commit. Thus Joseph's brethren began by disliking their brother, and taunting him; they perhaps thought they should never do anything worse; but they proceeded to sell him as a slave! And this was not all; they suffered their aged father to mourn Joseph as dead, and were become so hardened that they could witness his misery, and yet persist in the wicked falsehood they had framed to deceive him. Let their history be a warning to all to avoid the first beginning of sin.

## CHAPTER X.

## JOSEPH CAST INTO PRISON.

## THE DREAMS OF THE CHIEF BUTLER AND BAKER.

JOSEPH was sold by the merchants to Potiphar, a captain of the guard of the king of Egypt. "And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him; and Potiphar made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And Potiphar left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat."

But Joseph had farther trials to undergo. Potiphar's wife was a depraved woman, and she accused Joseph of being wicked and unfaithful to his master when he was absent, however good and upright he might appear in his sight; Potiphar believed her false accusation, and he cast Joseph into prison. Joseph was, however, innocent, and the blessing of God followed him in prison, as it had in Potiphar's house. The keeper of the prison soon discovered his virtuous

character, and did not keep him guarded, but allowed him liberty to go over the whole prison, and even committed the other prisoners to his care.

Amongst these prisoners were the chief butler, and the chief baker, to Pharaoh the king. One morning, when Joseph entered their prison, he found them sad; and when he enquired why they were sad, they said they had each had a dream, and there was no interpreter to tell them the meaning of their dreams. Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you; and the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him,"

"In my dream, behold, a vine was before me; and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes: And Pharaoh's cup was in my hands; and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hands:"

"And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days; Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place; and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler. But think on me, when it shall be well with thee; and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh,

and bring me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and now, also, have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon."

"When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream; and behold, I had three white baskets on my head; and in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of bakemeats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head."

"And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof: The three baskets are three days; yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree; and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

"And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler, and of the chief baker, among his servants. And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand: But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."



## CHAPTER XI.

PHARAOH'S DREAM. SEVEN YEARS OF PLENTY,  
AND SEVEN YEARS OF FAMINE.

Two years after Joseph had interpreted the dreams of the chief butler and baker, Pharaoh had a dream which troubled him; and he sent for his magicians and wise men, but they could not interpret it. Then the chief butler recollected Joseph, whom he had ungratefully forgotten in his prosperity. "I do remember my faults this day," he said to Pharaoh; and then he related how Joseph had told him and the chief baker the interpretation of their dreams, and in what manner they had been fulfilled. Then Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and he changed his raiment, and came to the king.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

"And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the

river\* ; and behold, there came up out of the river seven kine†, fat-fleshed and well-favoured ; and they fed in a meadow : And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favoured and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness : And the lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine : And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them : but they were still ill-favoured as at the beginning. So I awoke."

"And I saw in my dream, and behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full, and good : And behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them : And the thin years devoured the seven good ears : and I told this unto the magicians, but there was none that could declare it to me."

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one ; God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years ; and the seven good ears are seven years ; the dream is one. And the seven thin, and ill-favoured kine that came up after them, are seven years, and the seven empty ears, blasted with the east wind, shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh ; what God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt : And there shall arise after them

\* The river Nile.

† Cattle.

seven years of famine; all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine shall consume the land; And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt: that the land perish not through the famine."

"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, For as much as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art, Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou."

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And

Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand\* and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had: and they cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt."

"And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities, the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same. And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number."

\* This ring was, no doubt, a signet, or seal ring, by giving which, the king invested Joseph with his authority: the "gold chain" and "vesture of fine linen," were also probably part of the ceremony of his installation into the office of chief minister: in Persia, a dress of honour is still bestowed upon occasion of any individual being promoted in the royal service; and the greater or less magnificence of the dress and its accompaniments, marks with the nicest accuracy the degree of favour intended to be bestowed.

## CHAPTER XII.

## JACOB'S SONS COME TO BUY CORN IN EGYPT.

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another." "Behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

"And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren; for he said, lest peradventure mischief befall him."

"And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came; for the famine was in the land of Canaan. And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, from the land of Canaan to buy food."

"And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them, and said

unto them, ye are spies, to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

"And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons: we are true men; thy servants are no spies. And Joseph said, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land ye are come."

"And they said, thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

"And Joseph said unto them, that is it that I spoke unto you; saying, ye are spies. Hereby ye shall be proved; by the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you; or else by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye are spies. And he put them all together into ward three days."

"And Joseph said unto them, the third day, This do and live, for I fear God: If ye be true men let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison; go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses; But bring your youngest brother unto me; so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so."

"And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress

come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, spoke I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

"And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spoke unto them by an interpreter: And he turned himself about from them, and wept, and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes."

"Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack, and to give them provision for the way; and thus did he unto them. And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn,\* he espied his money; for, behold, it was in his sack's mouth. And he said unto his brethren, my money is restored; and lo! it is even in my sack; and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, what is this that God hath done unto us?"

"And they came unto Jacob their father unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befell unto them; saying, The man who is the lord of the land spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto

\* To give his ass provender ~~in~~ the inn, is literally correct: the inns, or caravanserais, in the East, are not houses inhabited by persons who provide travellers with food and lodging: they are merely open buildings, with stalls, or recesses enclosing a court, having generally a well of water, with troughs for watering the horses and camels in the centre.

him, we are true men, we are no spies. We be twelve brethren, sons of one father; one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men; leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your household, and be gone; And bring your youngest brother to me; then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men; so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffick in the land."

"And it came to pass, as they emptied their sacks, that behold every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid."

"And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not; and Simeon is not; and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me."

"And Reuben spoke unto his father saying, Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again."

"And Jacob said, My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave."

Chap. xliii.—"And the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of



Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, and buy us a little food."

"And Judah spake unto him saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you. If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food; But if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down, for the man said unto us, ye shall not see my face except your brother be with you."

"And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether ye had got a brother?"

"And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? And we told him according to the tenor of these words; could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?"

"And Judah said to his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go; that we may live and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones. I will be surety for him: of my hand shalt thou require him, if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever: For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned the second time."

"And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this; take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels; and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds."

“ And take double money in your hand ; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks. Carry it again in your hand : peradventure it was an oversight : take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man : And God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin. If I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

“ And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin ; and rose up and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.”

“ And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready ; for these men shall dine with me at noon. And the man did as Joseph bade ; and the man brought the men into Joseph’s house.”

“ And the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph’s house ; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time, are we brought in ; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses. And they came near to the steward of Joseph’s house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, and said, O Sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food : And it came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and behold, every man’s money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full

weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks. And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money. And he brought Simeon out unto them."

"And the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their asses provender. And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon; for they heard that they should eat bread there."

"And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth. And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive. And they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance."

And he lifted up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son."

"And Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. And he washed his face and went

out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread."

"And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians which did eat with him by themselves: because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.\* And they set before him, the first-born according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another."†

"And Joseph took and sent messes unto them from before him: but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs.‡ And they drank, and were merry with him."

Chap. xlii.—"And he commanded the steward

\* The custom of not eating with strangers of a different nation and religion, was general in the ancient world, and still prevails in many countries. It partly arose from certain meats being forbidden by the religion of one people, which might be allowed to the other, and partly from the fear of contracting a ceremonial impurity by eating out of the same dish with a person of another faith. Sometimes it is even thought necessary to break the dish out of which a stranger has eaten; washing not being considered sufficient to render it fit for use again.

† Joseph arranged his brothers according to their ages: it was the custom to pay scrupulous attention to the order of seniority at meals; but Joseph's brethren were naturally astonished at his knowing their ages so exactly.

‡ In the East every guest has a certain number of dishes set before him, according to the degree of honour intended to be conferred: the greater the number, the greater is the distinction bestowed. It is still the custom, among Oriental nations, for a king, or person of rank, to send dishes from his own table to those whom he desires to honour.

of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn money. And he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken."

"As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses. And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? Ye have done evil in so doing."

"And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing. Behold, the money which we brought in our sacks' mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold? With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen."

"And he said, now also let it be according unto your words: he with whom it is found shall be my servant; and ye shall be blameless. Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and

left at the youngest: and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city."

"And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house: for he was yet there; and they fell before him on the ground. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine? And Judah said; What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, and he also with whom the cup is found. And Joseph said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father."

"Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him. And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his

father would die. And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more. And our father said, go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, we cannot go down: for we may not see the man's face, except our youngest brother be with us. And thy servant my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons; And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces, and I saw him not since: And if ye take this also from me and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life; It shall come to pass, when he seeth the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave. For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever. Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father."

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, cause every man to go out from me. And there stood

no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethen. And he wept aloud : and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph : doth my father yet live ? And his brethren could not answer him ; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither : for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land : and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God ; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me Lord of all Egypt ; Come down unto me, tarry not. And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast : And there will I nourish thee ; for yet there are five years of famine ; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty.



And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."

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## CHAPTER XIII.

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY GO TO LIVE IN EGYPT.

JACOB DIES. JOSEPH DIES.

WHEN Pharaoh heard of Joseph's brethren being come, "it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for

your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours."

Then Joseph gave his brethren wagons, and provision for the journey, and loaded them with presents: he gave changes of raiment to each, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment; he also sent a present to his father "of the good things of Egypt," and corn, and bread, and meat for his father's journey. He then took leave of his brethren with this needful caution, "See that ye fall not out by the way."

"And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die."

Jacob and his sons, with their wives and children, and their cattle, and all that they had, quitted Canaan, and came down into Egypt. "And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen, and presented himself unto him, and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel

said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

"And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, thy father and thy brethren are come unto thee: the land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell; and if thou knowest any men of activity amongst them, then make them rulers over my cattle."

"And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, how old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh."

Joseph established his father and brethren in Goshen, a small but fertile province on the east of the river Nile, where there was pasturage for their cattle, and where they could live apart from the Egyptians, from whom they differed widely in their habits. Meanwhile, Joseph continued to rule over Egypt; and he governed so wisely, and with such justice, that both the king and people loved and honoured him. During the seven years of famine, he took from the latter their money, and cattle, and afterwards their land, in exchange for the corn he had laid up during the years of plenty; but it was only to restore them

again on more advantageous terms for the great body of the people : He gave the land back, reserving one-fifth of the produce for the expenses of the government, which allowed an ample profit to the husbandman, and, by being fixed, saved him from the oppression of rapacious governors.\*

Jacob lived seventeen years in Egypt, and died at the age of one hundred and forty-seven. Before his death he sent for Joseph, and desired him not to bury him in Egypt, but to carry his remains to Canaan, and inter them in the burying place of his fathers, which Joseph promised to do. Jacob then desired Joseph to bring his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, that he might bless them before he died. Joseph brought them, and

\* This at least appears to have been the motive of Joseph's taking up the land, and letting it out again ; but at this distance of time it is impossible to decide positively. That the people were satisfied and happy under the arrangement, is evident from the veneration in which Joseph's memory was held for centuries after his death : to such an extent was this carried, that almost every beneficial public work was attributed to him, whether justly or not, as is mentioned by those historians who treat of the early history of Egypt. Some of the people Joseph removed "to cities, from one end of the borders of Egypt, even to the other end thereof." It has been suggested that this might be for the purpose of placing them in safety, against the yearly overflowing of the river Nile. The cities of Egypt, at a later period, were certainly built uniformly on high hills, out of the reach of the annual inundation ; and it is not unlikely that this was done by order of the government, and when that government was strong and powerful : for experience teaches that the lower classes scarcely ever adopt such precautions of themselves, and never on a uniform plan.

Jacob, whose eyes were dim with age, laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, the eldest. When Joseph perceived it, he would have altered his father's hands; but Jacob refused, and said, "I know it, my son, I know it; he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations."

Jacob then called his sons together, and pronounced a solemn blessing upon each. This blessing, like that of Isaac upon his sons, was prophetic, and given by immediate inspiration from God, who alone can give to man a knowledge of futurity. The manner in which these blessings were severally accomplished, will be seen hereafter; meanwhile, we shall only mention, that the rights of the eldest were conferred on Judah, and the next place given to Ephraim the son of Joseph; while the descendants of Simeon and Levi were to be *scattered in Israel*. "I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." The very different fate of these two tribes, and yet the remarkable fulfilment of this blessing in their opposite destinies, will be pointed out in a future part of the history. The manner in which these blessings were given, or more properly, prophetic announcements of future events made, which came to pass as the natural result of the conduct and circumstances of the several subjects of them, but which could only have been *foretold*

by divine inspiration,—the manner, we repeat, in which these blessings were given, independently of the wishes, and even in some cases of the knowledge of him who gave them, yet more clearly exemplifies what has been previously remarked upon the blessing of Jacob. Manasseh, the elder son of Joseph was set aside, and Ephraim the younger, received the superior blessing, contrary to the wish of Joseph, and without any attempt on the part of Ephraim to obtain it. It is plain, therefore, that Jacob would have received his, without any intervention of his own, much less staining his soul with the sin of crafty deceit. We also see that the sin of an individual does not inflict continued loss, or disgrace upon his descendants, when they, by their conduct, show themselves deserving of a different fate. Thus Simeon and Levi had equally excited the anger of Jacob, and were apparently joined in the same sentence of condemnation: but how different was the fulfilment of the prophecy to their descendants, though both exactly in accordance with the words of Jacob! The descendants of Simeon appear to have joined in the murmurings and rebellions in the march through the desert: none of them ever rose to distinguished eminence; and though they received an allotment of land with the other tribes, it never appears to have been settled in, or conquered from the Philistines, and the tribe was thus *scattered* and lost in Israel. The tribe of Levi, on the contrary, early evinced a decided

and virtuous character, and a holy zeal for the worship of God, and obedience to the commands of their inspired lawgiver and leader. They, therefore, were selected as the priests, and raised to the highest rank as a tribe next to Judah, from whom was to descend the Messiah. Yet the Levites had no united territory, but were *scattered in Israel*; having separate cities in each tribe for their residence. We thus see that the "ways of God are always equal;" that he punishes sin, but ever "shews mercy to thousands of them that love him and keep his commandments."

The body of Jacob was embalmed; the mourning for him lasted seventy days in Egypt, after which Joseph and his brethren, with "chariots and horsemen," and "a very great company," attended their father's remains to Canaan, according to the desire which Jacob had expressed. The funeral procession rested seven days at the entrance of the land, and then proceeded to Mamre, where Jacob was buried in the cave of Machpelah. The tradition of this remarkable and magnificent procession, long remained in the land of Canaan. Joseph and his brethren returned to Egypt, after burying Jacob. Joseph lived to the age of one hundred and ten, and saw Ephraim's children of the third generation. Like his father Jacob, he desired to be buried in the land which, by the divine promise, he knew his descendants would inhabit; and his last injunction to his brethren was, that, when God

should visit them, and bring them into the land which "he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob," they should carry his bones with them into Canaan.

The sons of Jacob continued to live in Egypt; and we have no further account of them until the time of Moses.

END OF THE FIRST PERIOD





# THE SECOND PERIOD.

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FROM THE  
DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELITES OUT OF EGYPT,  
TO THE DEATH OF MOSES :

To which is added,

THE HISTORY OF JOB.

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Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.  
The Book of Job.



## THE SECOND PERIOD.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT. PHARAOH ILLTREATS THEM.

AFTER the death of Jacob and Joseph, which is related in the end of the book of Genesis, the children of Israel remained in Egypt about two hundred years.\* They dwelt in the land of Goshen, where Joseph had first established them; and here, it is said, they "increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them."

The Israelites had thus dwelt long in peace, when "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply,

\* It is not certainly known whether the period of 430 years mentioned in the Scriptures, is to be reckoned from Abraham's first going into Egypt, or from the time of Joseph. English chronologists and divines usually follow the former opinion, in which case the abode of the Israelites in Goshen amounts to 215 years. The question was agitated by Jewish writers, before the Christian era.

and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." If this king had wished to "*deal wisely*" he should have dealt *justly*, and have sought by kind and generous treatment to make the Israelites happy and contented in his country, and then he would not have feared their leaving it, or joining his enemies: instead of this, he resolved to treat them as slaves, and keep them by force; and by acting in this cruel, unjust manner, he brought distress and suffering upon himself, and upon his people.

Pharaoh\* set taskmasters over the Israelites, to make them work, "and the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; all the service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour."† Notwith-

\* All the kings of Egypt at this period are called Pharaoh in the Scriptures; the word signified 'king' in the Egyptian language.

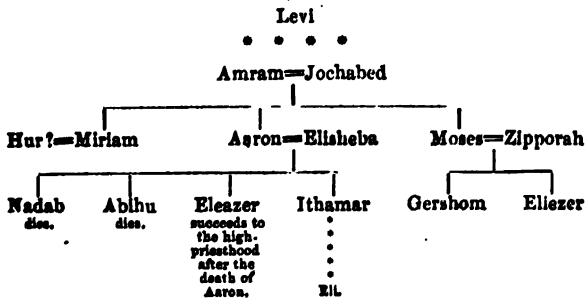
† The Israelites built Pharaoh two cities, Pithom and Raamses, which are called 'treasure cities.' Josephus states that the Israelites were employed on canals, and other important works, and also on the Pyramids; but a later date is usually assigned to these famous erections. The 'new king who knew not Joseph,' was probably the first king of a new dynasty, but which of the kings cannot be ascertained. The discoveries now making in the art of decyphering the hieroglyphics, will perhaps lead to the clearing up of this difficulty, together with others connected with the intricate subject of Egyptian chronology.

standing the ill-treatment of Pharaoh, the Israelites continued to prosper and multiply: for God blessed them. Then Pharaoh's anger and cruelty increased, and, finding that he could not destroy the people by hard usage and excessive toil, he commanded that all their sons born after that time should be cast into the river Nile.

It may be right to mention that the race of Shepherd kings, who desolated Egypt for a time, and left such a fearful impression of their cruelty upon the minds of the people, are supposed by some to have reigned during the abode of the Israelites in Goshen, with whom, by a few ancient writers, they have been confounded: but the opinion more generally adopted is, that this barbarous dynasty had reigned and been finally expelled previously to Joseph's being sold into Egypt; and that on this account shepherds were an abomination to the Egyptians. If this were the case, and the mild and just rule of Joseph followed soon after the tyrannical sway of this hated race, it would increase the veneration and love attached to his memory.

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#### GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE FAMILY OF MOSES.



## CHAPTER II.

## MOSES SAVED BY PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER.

AMRAM and Jochabed, the parents of Moses, were descended from Levi, the third son of Jacob.

Amram and Jochabed had two children, Miriam and Aaron, before Pharaoh made the cruel law mentioned in the last chapter. These, therefore, were safe; but when Moses was born, his parents were in the greatest distress, not knowing how they should conceal him from the officers of the king. Jochabed hid the child with care for three months; after which time, as he grew stronger, she feared his cries would betray him, and she made an ark, or basket of bullrushes, which she covered with slime and pitch; and having placed her infant in it, "she laid it in the flags by the river's brink." Here she left it, and went away out of sight, afraid that her anxiety and agitation would betray her; while Miriam staid to watch, and see what would become of the child. Now God caused it to happen that Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, as was the custom for women of rank to do in those times.

Moses lived more than three thousand years ago, when the manners and customs of nations were very different from those which now prevail.

The climate, too, in Egypt and Canaan, being so much hotter than in England, the daily habits of their inhabitants differ widely from ours : this should be remembered, or we shall not so well understand the history of the Israelites.

When Pharaoh's daughter saw the ark, " she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she opened it, she saw the child, and behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children."\*

" Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee ? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went, and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me."

Thus was Jochabed restored to her child : for the infant was safe so soon as the princess took it under her protection ; and the happy mother would bless God for having brought her out of her affliction. Pharaoh's daughter called the child's name " Moses," a word which meant in the Egyptian language, " saved, or drawn out of the water : " she adopted him for her son ; and Moses was carefully brought up, and was " learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."

The Egyptians were then considered the wisest people in the world. Later than the time of Moses, statesmen and philosophers from other countries, particularly from Greece, used to travel

\* The Israelites are called indifferently Hebrews or Israelites.



to Egypt, in order to study their laws, and learn their manners and customs. But the Egyptians had, notwithstanding, no just idea of the great and good Being who made them, and who was the Creator of every thing they saw around them. They did not worship Him, but they worshipped animals, and even vegetables.\* Their chief god was Apis, a live bull, which the priests pretended to find by certain fanciful marks; it had a white spot in the form of a crescent on its forehead, the figure of an eagle on its back, and a beetle on its tongue. When the god Apis died, all the Egyptians put on mourning for him, and his funeral was conducted with great pomp, and cost immense sums! The mourning lasted until another god Apis was found, which was conducted in state to the temple, amidst public rejoicings.

Besides the bull Apis, the Egyptians worshipped cats; and the Ibis, a bird of the stork kind;† and leeks and onions, and many other things quite as low and trifling. They paid divine honors to the river Nile, because its waters made the land fertile. This river rises in Abyssinia, a

\* These animals and vegetables were, no doubt, originally regarded by the priests as symbols or representations of their highest divinities, Osiris and Isis, the Sun and Moon: but the symbolical meaning was lost to the common people, who were characterized by the lowest superstition.

† Baron Cuvier considers it to be a curlew (*Numenius Ibis*); "rather larger than that of Europe."

country to the south of Egypt, which being mountainous, and higher than Egypt, when rain falls there and on the table lands in Nubia during the rainy season of the Tropics, the water runs down the sides of the mountains, and forming numerous streams which join the Nile, this river pours down into Egypt, where it rises higher and higher until it overflows its banks, and at last covers the whole country. Canals were cut by the Egyptians, to carry the water to every part, and pumps were constructed to raise it to the surface of the high ground. The towns were built on hills, with raised causeways between them for roads; as this inundation or overflowing of the Nile, happened regularly every year. The water was about three months rising to its greatest height, and nearly as long in subsiding. Rain seldom falls in Egypt; but God appointed the river Nile to overflow its banks in this wonderful manner, which gives the country moisture, and renders the land rich and productive.

## CHAPTER III.

## MOSES FLIES FROM EGYPT.

MOSES was brought up at the court of Pharaoh, where he continued to live until he was forty years old. But though he was thus separated from his brethren, he never ceased to love them; and while living in the midst of pomp and luxury, and regarded with respect and honour as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he thought with sorrow of his oppressed countrymen, who were in the mean time treated with the greatest rigor and cruelty by the Egyptians. The Egyptian people were equally guilty with their king in enslaving the Israelites: they joined him in his injustice and tyranny; otherwise Pharaoh could not have oppressed them, as the authority of the kings of Egypt was limited, and they were obliged to consult the wishes of their people. It is necessary to observe this, because the people were punished by the plagues for their own cruelty to the Israelites: and it will be seen that as soon as the people were terrified, and earnestly desired the Israelites to depart out of their land, Pharaoh let them go.

When Moses was forty years old, he determined to leave Pharaoh's court, to go and visit

his afflicted brethren. He did not forget or despise his brethren because they were in affliction, but sought to be of use to them and comfort them; and we ought to imitate him in cherishing these kind feelings, though we cannot show our regard in the same way.

When Moses went to visit the Israelites, they were working under their hard task-masters: and he saw an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew: "he avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian." And when he had slain him, he hid his body in the sand. "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not."\*

"And when he went out the second day, Behold two men of the Hebrews strove together; and he said to him that did the wrong, "Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? Sirs, ye are brethren, why do ye wrong one to another?" But the Hebrew replied, "Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? and dost thou intend to kill me as thou killedst the Egyptian?"

Then Moses was afraid, for he knew that if Pharaoh heard of his having killed the Egyptian, his life would be in danger; and as his countrymen showed so bad a spirit, and would not hearken to him, he could do them no good. No sooner did Pharaoh hear of what Moses had done, than he sought to slay him, on which he

\* Acts vii. 22—28.

fled, and escaping out of Egypt, took refuge in the land of Midian.

The land of Midian lies on the east of the Red Sea, on the borders of Arabia and Palestine. The country consists of vast sandy plains, interspersed with tracts of green pasture ground, where flocks of sheep and goats feed, belonging to the wandering tribes which inhabit those deserts. The Midianites who lived in this part, were remotely descended from Abraham; and, therefore, probably worshipped the One true God. The people were shepherds, and their wealth, like that of the patriarchs, consisted in their flocks and herds. As they were obliged to seek pasturage for their cattle, they could not long remain stationary, but wandered about; always taking care to be near a well of water.

The wells, in this hot country, were of great value. There were not many of them, and the cattle required a regular supply of water. The shepherds who took care of the flocks of their different masters, often used to dispute and fight at the wells, each trying to draw water for his own cattle, and keep the others away; and in modern times, the Arabs, who live in these deserts, frequently go to war to secure the possession of a valuable well. This will explain what happened to Moses when he fled into the land of Midian.

Moses sat down by the side of a well; and, whilst he was there, the daughters of Jethro (or Reuel) a prince and priest of Midian, came to

water their father's flock. They drew water from the well; but when they had filled the troughs ready for the sheep to drink, some shepherds with their flocks came up, and being the stronger, unjustly drove the daughters of Jethro away. But Moses stood up and helped the daughters of Jethro, and watered their flock.

When Jethro heard of what Moses had done, he sent and invited him to stay with him. And Moses went and dwelt with Jethro. And Moses married Zipporah the daughter of Jethro; and he had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. And he continued to live for forty years in Midian, keeping the sheep of his father-in-law, and leading the peaceful life of a shepherd.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BURNING BUSH.

DURING the forty years which Moses lived in Midian, the Israelites were suffering under the cruel oppression of the Egyptians. But they cried to God in their affliction, and he graciously heard their prayers, and sent Moses to deliver them from their hard bondage.

Moses was appointed to deliver the Israelites in the following manner. He had driven the flocks of Jethro into the neighbourhood of Mount Horeb. "And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked; and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."

"And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses; and he said, Here am I. And he said, draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy

ground.\* Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face."

"And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayst bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

And God declared his name to Moses—I AM THAT I AM—which signifies that God has existed uncreated from all eternity, and will exist for ever.

God commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh, and bid him let the Israelites leave Egypt; but

\* *Shoes* or *Sandals*, a piece of leather bound on the bottom of the foot with straps which cross over the instep. It was usual to wear these only out of doors, not in the house; and they were invariably taken off before entering the presence of persons of rank, as a mark of respect.—How much more when worshipping before God!



as He knows every thing, even before it happens, He knew that Pharaoh would not let them depart until terrified by the plagues which fell upon him and his people; this the Almighty foretold to Moses, that he might not be discouraged when Pharaoh should refuse to hear him.

“And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee.”

“And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.”

“And the Lord said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom. And he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, it was leprous as snow.\* And he said, put thine hand into thy bosom again. And he put his hand into his bosom again; and plucked it out of his bosom, and behold it was turned again as his other flesh.”

\* The leprosy is a loathsome disease, which turns the flesh white.

“And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.”

“And Moses said unto the LORD, O my LORD, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord? Now, therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”

God told Moses that Aaron his brother, who would come forth to meet him, should accompany him, and speak to the people. Moses then returned to Jethro, and taking leave of him, set out on his mission to his brethren. He took with him his wife and two sons, but afterwards sent them back; in order, no doubt, that they might be in safety during the approaching troubles in Egypt. Aaron met him, “And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.”

## CHAPTER V.

## THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

1, WATER TURNED INTO BLOOD. 2, FROGS.  
3, LICE. 4, FLIES. 5, MURRAIN OF BEASTS.  
6, BOILS AND BLAINS. 7, HAIL WITH THUNDER  
AND LIGHTNING. 8, LOCUSTS. 9, DARKNESS.  
10, THE DEATH OF THE FIRST BORN OF THE  
EGYPTIANS.

ON their return to Egypt, Moses and Aaron went first to Goshen, where they gathered together the Elders of the Children of Israel, and declared God's gracious message, and performed before them the miracles which He had commanded. And when the Israelites saw the miracles, they were convinced that God had indeed appeared unto Moses, and was with him: and they rejoiced exceedingly.

Then Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh,\* and said; "Thus said the Lord God of Israel. Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness."

But Pharaoh refused, and said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go." And he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, but was angry; and sent for the task

\* Successor to the Pharaoh who reigned when Moses fled into Midian.

masters that were set over the Israelites, and commanded them not to give the Hebrews any more straw for their bricks, but oblige them to go and gather straw for themselves; notwithstanding which they were to furnish the same quantity of bricks which they did before.

This was a great addition to the labour of the oppressed Israelites, who when they could no longer fulfil their tasks, were beaten by their cruel task masters, and taunted with being idle. They appealed to the compassion and justice of Pharaoh, but they appealed in vain: he reproached them with wishing to go and sacrifice to the LORD, only because they were idle, and wanted to escape from their labour: "Go therefore now and work; for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks."

The people were now in greater distress than before, and they murmured against Moses and Aaron, whom they unjustly accused of being the cause of Pharaoh's anger.

And Moses prayed to God. And God said unto Moses, "I have also heard the groanings of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for

a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob: and I will give it you for an heritage. I am the Lord."

At this time God again declared his name to be JEHOVAH, which signifies the faithful and unchangeable, and self-existent. And Moses endeavoured to encourage the people with these promises, but they would not hearken unto him.

Then Moses and Aaron went again before Pharaoh, and demanded that he would let the Israelites go; and to prove to Pharaoh that they had received great and extraordinary powers from God, they wrought the same miracle before him which they had wrought before the Israelites. Aaron took the rod of Moses and cast it on the ground; and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh sent for his magicians: now these magicians were skilful and well practised in all the arts of deception, and they contrived to imitate the miracle of Aaron: they introduced other serpents, and made it seem as though their rods were changed: but Aaron's serpent devoured the serpents of the magicians.\*

\* It is not surprising that these magicians should be able to imitate the miracle of Aaron, so as to deceive Pharaoh and his court. The priests of Egypt were famous for their deceptions and pretended enchantments, and their supernatural power was

Still Pharaoh refused to hearken unto Moses; his heart was hardened, and he would not let Israel go.

When it is said in the Scriptures, that "Pharaoh's heart was hardened," or, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart," it does not mean that God prevented Pharaoh from doing what was right; but, on the contrary, that Pharaoh obstinately persisted in acting wickedly, when he might have known better. It is a usual scriptural expression, and simply means that the man whose heart is said to be "hardened" is wicked, and follows his own wrong inclinations, and indulges his own bad passions, instead of doing his duty, and obeying God's commands.

The plagues of Egypt were now to commence; and this cruel king, and his equally cruel people, were to be punished for their wickedness. Pharaoh

firmly believed in and feared by king and people. Add to which, it is probable that, as Aaron had wrought the same miracle before, in the presence of the Israelites, of which there can be little doubt the priests were apprised, they would be prepared. Serpents are much used by Indian Jugglers of the present day: the feats they are made to perform are sufficiently puzzling even to the sceptical eyes of Europeans: they appear to be easily tamed, and are taught to obey certain sounds, and come and go at the will of their masters. A remarkable circumstance is mentioned in the *Edin. Cab. Library, Africa*, p. 471:—

"The Egyptian jugglers, by pressing the neck of the singular serpent, *Coluber haje* Linn, between their fingers, produce a kind of catalepsy, which renders it stiff and motionless. This is rather a curious fact when considered in connexion with the scriptural narrative in the 7th chapter of Exodus."

went down in the morning to the river;\* and Moses was commanded to present himself before him, and say, "The Lord God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and behold, hitherto thou wouldst not hear. Thus saith the LORD: In this shalt thou know that I am the LORD: behold, I (Moses) will smite with the rod that is in mine hand, the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned into blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river."

Again Pharaoh refused to hearken unto Moses. Then Moses gave his rod to Aaron, and he stretched it over the river, and over the streams and over the ponds, and all the waters in Egypt became blood. The fish died, and the people could not drink the water; they were obliged to dig fresh wells, and in some of these the magicians again imitated the miracle, by causing the water to become red like blood. It was not difficult for them to do this in a few tanks, and the king was eager to believe them, rather than Moses.

There must have been something peculiarly awful to the Egyptians in this first plague. The river Nile, the source of their country's fertility,

\* Most probably for the purpose of performing some religious ceremony.

was adored by them as a god—they now saw it smitten at the command of Moses ; its waters which were, and still are, famous for their delicious taste and healthy quality, all at once became loathsome and unfit to drink ; and this instantly, by the simple stretching over it of a rod in the name of Jehovah, the Lord God of the enslaved Israelites : the river remained polluted seven days, and then came the second plague.

“ And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him. Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go that they may serve me. And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs ; And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house ; and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneading troughs. And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.” And Moses declared this message to Pharaoh, but he would not let the Israelites go.

Then Aaron stretched his rod over the river, and the streams, and the ponds, and frogs came up and covered all the land of Egypt. And they were in every house, and in every thing, even in the ovens and in the kneading troughs, as God had declared they should be.\*

\* The magicians brought up frogs also, which was easy, when the land was full of them.



Then Pharaoh was terrified, and he "called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people, and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord."

And Moses said, when shall I intreat for thee? And he said, To-morrow. And Moses answered, "Be it according to thy word; that thou mayst know that there is none like unto the Lord our God. And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy house, and from thy servants, and from thy people; and they shall remain in the river only."

And the Lord did according to the word of Moses. And on the morrow, at the time fixed, there were no frogs except in the river.

But when Pharaoh saw that the frogs were gone, he refused to let the Israelites depart.

Then Moses commanded Aaron to strike with his rod the dust of the earth, and it became lice; small lice which were upon man and beast.

At this the magicians were dismayed. The priests of Egypt laid the greatest stress upon cleanliness and outward purity; they washed several times a-day, and twice in the night; they wore linen robes, which were at that time uncommon, and extremely costly, (woollen being generally worn), and paid a superstitious attention to keeping their clothes and persons free from pollution. How great, then, must have been their horror at seeing their bodies covered with

lice; and on hearing that the whole country of Egypt, and all the people were infested with these disgusting insects! Yet they attempted to imitate this miracle also, but here they failed. They could not produce lice as Moses had done, and they were now forced to acknowledge, that He who gave him such power was the true and only **Lord** of heaven and earth. "This," said the convicted magicians to their wicked king, "this is the finger of God." They attempted no more to imitate the miracles which Moses wrought: but Pharaoh's heart was wicked, and he still refused to let the Israelites go.

The next morning Moses, by God's command, appeared before Pharaoh, as he went down to the water, and said unto him, "Thus saith the **LORD**, Let my people go that they may serve me. Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there: to the end thou mayst know that I am the **LORD** in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be."

And the **LORD** did so. And on the morrow there was a grievous swarm of flies in the house of Pharaoh, and over all the land, except in the

small district of Goshen in which the Israelites dwelt.

Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and said that he would let the children of Israel go and sacrifice to the LORD in the wilderness : and he asked Moses to intreat the LORD for him, that the plague might be stayed.

“ And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people to-morrow : but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.”

And Moses intreated the Lord, and the plague was stayed ; the swarms of flies were dispersed, and there remained not one. Yet Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not let the people go.

Moses was commanded to go again to Pharaoh, and say, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go that they may serve me ; for if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, Behold the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field,\* upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep : there shall be a very grievous murrain. And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt ; and there shall nothing die of all that

\* ‘The cattle which were *in the field* ;’ not those which were under cover ; thus the war horses escaped, and also probably the animals worshipped as gods in the Temples ; since nothing is said of the terror and dismay which the sudden destruction of the latter would have caused.

is the children's of Israel. To-morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land."

Accordingly, on the morrow great numbers of the cattle of the Egyptians died. And Pharaoh sent, and behold there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. Yet Pharaoh would not let the people go.

Then "the LORD said unto Moses, and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it towards the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh. And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt."

And Moses and Aaron did so: and the boil was upon all the Egyptians, and upon the magicians, so that they could not stand before Moses. Still Pharaoh would not allow the Israelites to depart.

And God commanded Moses to stand again before Pharaoh, and tell him that on to-morrow it should rain a very grievous hail; the Egyptians were warned to bring up their remaining cattle out of the fields; and those that feared the Lord sent and brought up their servants and cattle, while those that did not, left their cattle in the field, and they perished. Pharaoh refused to obey, and on the morrow the LORD said unto Moses, "Stretch forth thine hand towards heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon

every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt."

"And Moses stretched forth his rod towards heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground, and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt, since it became a nation."

It has been already stated, that rain and hail are very seldom known to fall in Egypt, that country being watered by the river Nile; what then must have been the terror of the Egyptians at beholding a tempest so terrific, and so destructive. The flax and the barley were grown up, and these were smitten. From the former the Egyptians manufactured the fine linen, for which they were famous throughout the world, and from barley was made a liquor which formed the drink of the common people. The wheat and rye escaped, as they were not grown up, and in all the land of Goshen there was no hail.

Then Pharaoh was afraid, and he sent "and called for Moses and Aaron, and said, I have sinned this time; the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the LORD, (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer." "And Moses said unto him, as soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD;

and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayst know how that the earth is the LORD's. But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God."

"And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and spread abroad his hands unto the Lord, and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth. And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants." And Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go.

The next plague which fell upon the land of Egypt completed the destruction of its produce, and took that which the hail and the tempest had spared. The locust is a voracious insect, resembling our common grasshopper in form, but larger, and of a dark brownish green color. It is seldom found singly, but comes in immense swarms, carried by the wind; and wherever these swarms alight vegetation completely disappears. Locusts are not uncommon in the East, but Egypt was usually exempt from them: the Egyptians, however, were well acquainted with their destructive ravages, and were filled with apprehension at the prospect of their coming upon their exhausted land. When, therefore, Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, and declared that if he still refused to let the Israelites depart, locusts should come upon the morrow, and eat up all that the hail had left, and cover

the earth so that it could not be seen,—when the servants of Pharaoh heard this, they remonstrated with the king, and intreated him to let the Hebrews go. Then Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron, and he said that the people might go, but that they should leave their children behind: to this Moses would not consent. At first he had asked for leave to go and sacrifice to the LORD in the wilderness, but that was refused: he now demanded leave to go, with the young and the old, their sons and their daughters, their flocks and their herds, to hold a feast unto the LORD. This Pharaoh rejected with anger, and Moses and Aaron were driven from his presence.

“Then Moses stretched his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.” And “they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left.”

“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste. And he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you. Now, therefore, forgive I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the Lord your God, that he may take away from me this death only.”

And Moses intreated the Lord: and the locusts were driven away by a strong west wind, so that of all the myriads there remained not one. Still Pharaoh refused to let Israel go.

And now came the ninth plague, more awful and terrific than all those which had preceded it. The Egyptians worshipped the Sun (Osiris) as the greatest and most glorious of their divinities : the Nile had been struck first ; the Sun was darkened in the last plague before the passover, yet would not the Egyptians and their impious king learn that these divinities were nothing in themselves, and that Jehovah who formed them, and made them useful and beautiful to his creatures, or smote them at his pleasure, is alone the God and Creator of the World. Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven ; and there was a thick darkness : "*a darkness which might be felt.*"

This darkness so awful, so terrible, lasted three days, The Egyptians saw not one another, neither rose any from his place : but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses, and said, "Go ye, serve the Lord, only let your flocks and your herds be stayed : let your little ones also go with you."

But neither to this would Moses consent. "Not a hoof," he said, "should be left behind," Pharaoh again refused, and commanded Moses to quit his presence, and never appear before him again. And Moses said, "Thou hast spoken well : I will see thy face again no more : " but before he left the king, he proclaimed the dreadful judgment which was yet to fall upon him,— "the death of the first-born in every family in



Egypt." And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid servant that is behind the mill: and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more." "And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me (Moses) saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out." When Moses had thus spoken, he quitted the presence of the king, who by his obstinate perseverance in wickedness, had already caused the destruction of the property of his subjects, and was about to sacrifice their lives.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE TEN PLAGUES CONCLUDED.

## THE PASSOVER.

WE now come to the last and greatest of the plagues, and to the institution of the Passover. This was the most important and most sacred of the Feasts, or Holy Festivals of the Jews, and commemorated the signal deliverance of the Israelites, when the Angel of Death *passed over* their doors, sprinkled with the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and slew the first-born in all the houses of the Egyptians.

The Egyptians had already suffered under nine different judgments of God, each one of which had been foretold to them, each one of which happened exactly at the time, and in the manner which Moses declared from God that it should happen, and each one of which Pharaoh and his people might have averted, by submitting to the Lord, and obeying his holy, wise, and just command. They were only required to allow a people to leave their country, over whom they could pretend to exercise no just right. They had, it is true, enslaved them, and forced them to labour in their public works : but even in that early age, when the rights of

their fellow-creatures were but little regarded by the powerful, the Egyptians must have known that their conduct to the Israelites was oppressive, and unjust in the extreme. The conduct of the Egyptians was wrong, in oppressing the Israelites in the first instance; but they committed another and far greater crime in refusing to obey a direct command from God. As Moses spoke in His name, and as he worked a miracle which no human being could do of himself, to prove that he did not falsely assume to himself the authority of a messenger from Jehovah, Pharaoh ought to have believed and obeyed him. Then, when the plagues came, and came expressly, because Pharaoh did not obey Moses, the Egyptians could not but know that those terrific judgments came from no human hand. We may safely assert that they did know it, and yet they dared to resist. For this they were punished; and so will all be punished, here or in the world to come, who know God's holy will, and do not seek to obey it.

During the three days of darkness the terrified Egyptians never rose from their place; they staid within their dwellings, and the Israelites had thus three days rest from their tasks: a needful and merciful preparation for the long and toilsome journey they were about to take; and, as light was in their dwellings, they could make ready for their departure, and prepare the Paschal Lamb. On the tenth day of the month of Abib, which nearly corresponds to the month

March,\* Moses commanded every family, (or, if small, two families might join together) to take up from their flock, or purchase, a lamb without blemish; three days after, on the fourteenth day of the month, the Lamb was to be slain, between the hours of three and five in the afternoon, and the master of the house, dipping a bunch of hyssop in the blood was to strike the door posts, and after that none were to pass out till the following morning.† The Paschal Lamb was to be roasted whole,‡ neither divided into portions nor boiled, but roasted with fire, and cooked with bitter herbs. When all was ready, and the fatal night drew on, the Israelites prepared themselves as for a journey: they girded round them their loose flowing dress, put their sandals on their feet, took a staff in their hands, and thus, standing and ready for instant departure, they ate the Passover. Their bread was unleavened, or made without yeast, which would have required time to ferment, and this bread they carried with them and ate for seven days. While the Israelites thus partook of the feast of the Passover, and prepared for flight, ready to start the instant Moses should give them the com-

\* Abib, afterwards called Nisan, takes in a part of March and April. From this time the ecclesiastical year of the Jews began with this month.

† This does not appear to have been adhered to in later times; perhaps not when the Israelites were peaceably settled in their own land.

‡ Neither were the bones to be broken whilst eating it.

mand, the last Plague fell upon the wretched Egyptians. At midnight, as Moses had foretold, the first-born in every family in Egypt lay dead.

“And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt: from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon: and all the first-born of cattle.\* And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians: and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.”

It was a custom with the Egyptians to rush out into the streets, and bewail with loud cries and shrieks the death of any individual. What then must have been the terror and agony of that night, when every house sent forth its wretched inmates to weep and mourn the loss of their first-born. The Egyptians, struck with dismay, now impatiently urged the Israelites to depart; and Pharaoh, not less terrified than his people, sent in haste to Moses, and commanded him to go forth from among his people, he and all the children of Israel, with their little ones, and their cattle, or, said the Egyptians, “we be all dead men.” The Israelites, being prepared, lost no time in obeying an order which they justly feared Pharaoh might recal; and, assembling

\* Consequently the animals worshipped as gods, which were generally selected from the first born.

themselves together in their tribes, with their families, and their cattle, they commenced their march at break of day. Before their departure, the Egyptians, who were afraid lest they should suffer further for their ill-treatment of them, brought the once despised Israelites rich presents, which they eagerly pressed on their acceptance. Every thing the Israelites valued, or, which they thought would be useful to them in their journey, the Egyptians offered, in order to propitiate those whom they now acknowledged to be under the immediate protection of Heaven. These presents Moses had previously commanded the people to accept, and thus the Egyptians were "spoiled,"\* and the Israelites were provided with those things which they could not possess in a state of slavery, but which they would want in the wilderness.

Thus they were amply supplied with gold, silver, and precious stones, and most probably, with weapons of war. In the hurry of this sudden flight, the promise made by their fathers to the patriarch Joseph was not forgotten; they carried his bones with them out of Egypt.

\* The word translated "borrowed," Exod. xii. 35, does not mean to borrow, intending to return, but to "receive from," or "accept."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE ISRAELITES LEAVE EGYPT. THE PASSAGE  
OF THE RED SEA. THE SONG OF MOSES.

THE Israelites, thus loaded with presents, and carrying with them the unleavened bread they had prepared the night of the Passover,—having their kneading-troughs bound up in their clothes, and driving with them their flocks and herds,—set out from Goshen, and marched from Rameses as far as Succoth the first day. Here they pitched their tents, and rested for the night. From Succoth two routes led to the land of Canaan: one to the north through the country of the Philistines, a warlike people, living on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea; the other to the south, round the head of the Red Sea. On this last route the Israelites proceeded another day's journey, as far as Etham,\* a town on the

\* Etham.—The Red Sea which formerly reached to Etham, has receded as low as the modern town of Suez, near which it is supposed the passage of the Israelites was effected. At the present time the sea in this part is about two miles across; but it was probably wider when the sea extended farther north. The following extract from Mr. Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, third edition, vol. ii. page 29, may be interesting to the reader, as showing the great change which has taken place, and continues gradually to take place in the boundary of this sea.

"An extraordinary gain of land is described to have taken place at the head of the Red Sea, the Isthmus of Suez having doubled in breadth since the age of Herodotus. In his time,

extreme north point of the Red Sea, where they encamped the second night. In pursuing this way the Israelites were divinely directed. On leaving the land of Goshen, a pillar of cloud appeared before them, and passed slowly on in the direction which they were to follow. At night this cloud became a pillar of fire, giving them light; and in this manner were the Israelites led out of Egypt, and afterwards through the wilderness: the cloud disappeared at the death of Moses, when the people were arrived on the borders of Canaan, and no longer required its guidance.

At Etham the children of Israel were close upon the desert; here they would have been safe from the pursuit of Pharaoh; and here, therefore, any leader acting merely from his own judgment would, in all probability, have led them. But Moses did not direct the Israelites by his own judgment, but according as he received command from God; and there was yet another and more

“and down to that of Arrian, Heroopolis was on the coast; now  
“it is as far distant from the Red Sea as from the Mediter-  
“ranean.\* Suez in 1541 received into its harbour the fleet of  
“Solyman; but it is now changed into a sand bank. The  
“country called Tehama on the Arabian side of the Gulf, has  
“increased from three to six miles since the Christian era.  
“Inland from the present ports are the ruins of more ancient  
“towns, which were once on the Sea shore, and bore the same  
“names. It is said that the blown sand from the deserts sup-  
“plies some part of the materials of this new land, and that the  
“rest is composed of shells and corals, of which the growth is  
“very rapid.”

\* Danville, *Mém. Sur l'Égypte*, p. 108. Von Hoff, vol. i. p. 390.



awful punishment to fall upon Pharaoh. At Etham the cloud which went before the Israelites suddenly altered its course, and, instead of entering the desert, descended by the western side of the Red Sea to Pi-hahiroth:\* whither the people followed it, and encamped between Migdol and the sea. They were here in a mountainous district, with the sea in their front; and in this apparently dangerous situation, they saw the Egyptians coming in pursuit of them. Pharaoh had repented of having given his consent to their departure, and had hastily assembled his army,† and followed after them, with “six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them:” he overtook them at evening, as they reached the sea.

And when the Israelites beheld the Egyptians, they were sore afraid; and they murmured against Moses, and said, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians; for it had been better for

\* Pi-hahiroth, *the mouth or pass of Hiroth*, an opening in the mountains.

† The soldiers of Egypt were a distinct caste, and lived in certain cities, from whence they could be called together at a short notice. Trades and professions were hereditary in Egypt. The warriors formed the second caste: the priesthood was the first, in which was the king, who was both king and priest.

us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

But Moses said, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show you to-day. For the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.

The cloud which had hitherto gone before the camp of the Israelites suddenly removed, and stood between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of the Israelites, so that the one came not near the other all the night; and it gave light to the Israelites, but it was a cloud, and darkness to the Egyptians.

"And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left."

Thus were the Israelites miraculously delivered from the hands of their enemies; and now quickly followed the final punishment of Pharaoh and his host.

When, in the morning, the Egyptians saw that the Israelites had escaped, they hastily pursued after them, and entered the dry path between the wall of water which stood upon either side, and through which the Israelites had

safely passed. They entered,—Pharaoh and all his host, his horsemen, and his chariots of war; but when they reached the middle they were filled with sudden fear, for the LORD troubled them; and they drove their chariots heavily, and they cried, “Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.”

Then the LORD commanded Moses to stretch his rod over the sea again, “and the waters returned, and covered the chariots and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them.” “Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians: and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”

This was the wretched end of Pharaoh and of the Egyptians who followed him: it should warn all persons to stop in the career of wickedness, and to repent sincerely, while there is time. Pharaoh did not once really repent, because he did not leave off sinning against God; being sorry for a little while, and then doing the same thing again is not repenting, nor will such unprofitable sorrow save us from God's displeasure, any more than it saved Pharaoh.

Moses and the Israelites were grateful to God for delivering them out of the hand of the Egyptians; and they sang the following beautiful song in commemoration of the event:

## THE SONG OF MOSES.

“I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath  
“triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider  
“hath he thrown into the sea.

“The LORD is my strength and song, and he  
“is become my salvation; he is my God, and I  
“will prepare him an habitation; my father’s  
“God; and I will exalt him.

“The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his  
“name.

“Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast  
“into the sea; his chosen captains also are  
“drowned in the Red Sea.

“The depths have covered them: they sank  
“into the bottom as a stone.

“Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious  
“in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed  
“in pieces the enemy.

“And in the greatness of thine excellency  
“thou hast overthrown them that rose up against  
“thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which con-  
“sumed them as stubble.

“And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters  
“were gathered together: the floods stood up-  
“right as an heap, and the depths were congealed  
“in the heart of the sea.

“The enemy said, I will pursue, I will over-  
“take, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be  
“satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword,  
“my hand shall destroy them.

"Thou didst blow with thy wind; the sea  
"covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty  
"waters.

"Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the  
"gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness,  
"fearful in praises, doing wonders?

"Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth  
"swallowed them.

"Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people  
"which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided  
"them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

"The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow  
"shall take hold on the inhabitants of Pales-  
"tina.

"Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed:  
"the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take  
"hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan  
"shall melt away.

"Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by  
"the greatness of thine arm they shall be as  
"still as a stone; till thy people shall pass over,  
"O LORD, till the people pass over which thou  
"hast purchased.

"Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in  
"the mountain of thine inheritance; in the  
"place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee  
"to dwell in; in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which  
"thy hands have established.

"The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

"For the house of Pharaoh went in with his  
"chariots, and with his horsemen into the sea,  
"and the Lord brought again the waters of the

"sea upon them : but the children of Israel went  
"on dry land in the midst of the sea."

"And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of  
Moses, and Aaron took a timbrel in her hand;  
and all the women went out with her with  
timbrels and with dances.

"And Miriam answered them, sing ye to the  
LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse  
and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

This most beautiful song was composed by  
Moses more than three thousand years ago. It  
was chaunted in triumph by the Israelites in the  
first moments of victory and deliverance, and  
was ever afterwards sung at their solemn festi-  
vals, when they met to celebrate the wonders  
which had been wrought for their nation. In  
that remote age, this was the manner in which  
great national events were kept in remembrance.  
Many copies of their historical records could not  
be made, as writing with letters was scarcely  
known, and seldom used; but the memory of  
great men and their actions was preserved in  
songs, which the bards recited to their harps or  
timbrels, and which the people learnt, and trans-  
mitted to their children. Moses was a sublime  
poet as well as a great lawgiver; and he com-  
posed several hymns and songs of this kind:  
one, entitled, "A Prayer of Moses, the Man of  
God," is in the Book of Psalms (xc.) The mode  
of chaunting these hymns was by two or more  
bands, each answering the others in parts; the

same idea and sometimes the same words are taken up and repeated, with more or less alteration, or the strain is carried on in the manner of question and reply. In the song of Moses, Miriam comes out of the head of the women of Israel, and, taking up the subject, answers Moses and the Israelites, in a sort of chorus, "Sing ye to the Lord for he hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

The Israelites were remarkably attached to their national music and poetry; and singing and dancing formed a part in all their public rejoicings: the night on which they celebrated the Passover, (not the first Passover in Egypt, but the feast in memory of it which they held once a year when settled in Canaan,) they spent in repeating and chaunting the songs and hymns which recalled to their remembrance the great deliverances of their ancestors: and we shall find several specimens of this kind of poetry as we proceed. The song of Moses is poetry, and poetry of the highest kind, though it is not in rhyme; the ideas are poetical; and, if it gives pleasure to those who read it now, what must have been the feelings of the Israelites who sung it on the borders of the Red Sea, immediately after the overthrow of their enemies, when for the first time they felt that they were in safety and in freedom?

The Greeks and Romans, who flourished several centuries after the time of Moses, erected

triumphal arches and splendid monuments in commemoration of their victories ; and persons take pleasure now in travelling to Italy and Greece, in order to visit the ruins which remain of those famous monuments, and trace out the inscriptions upon them. The Egyptians erected obelisks to hand down the fame of their mighty deeds to future ages,—but these magnificent obelisks and triumphal arches are now in ruins, and comparatively few persons can go to see them ; whereas the beautiful but simple song of Moses is in the hands of every one who is happy enough to possess a Bible, and this record has remained, when the proudest monuments of stone have crumbled into dust !

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## CHAPTER VIII.

BITTER WATER SWEETENED AT MARAH. ELIM.  
GIFT OF QUAILS AND MANNA.

AFTER celebrating their triumphal passage through the Red Sea, the Israelites continued their journey, and entered the wilderness of Shur. An extensive desert lay between them and the Promised Land, but instead of crossing it by the nearest route, the miraculous pillar of cloud which guided their march led southward, towards the district of Horeb. The Israelites were not yet prepared for entering Canaan. They



had been living in a state of bondage in a foreign land, where a regular form of government was established in which they had no part. This state of servitude had now ceased; they were become a free and independent people, and laws were necessary to preserve order, and save them from falling into the evil and idolatrous customs of the nations round. These laws they were, however, unable to frame for themselves. They had neither knowledge nor virtue equal to such a task; and it must be remembered that no miracle was wrought upon their minds, to make them suddenly free from error and weakness; although the miracles which they witnessed, and the immediate relation in which they stood to the Divine Being would, in time, change and elevate their character. Meanwhile, their state was mercifully cared for by Him who "careth for all His creatures," and their wants supplied. Moses was directed to lead the Israelites to Mount Sinai, where the Divine Being himself ordained for them a code of laws such as no wisdom of man could frame, and no mere human power have enforced.

The desert of Shur, through which the Israelites now directed their march, is supposed to have remained unaltered to the present day. It is described as being a vast plain of sand and stones, here and there broken by rugged mountains, and exposed to the burning rays of the sun. The chief danger in passing the desert arises from the want of water; springs of fresh

water being rarely found, and at the distance of several days' journey apart. Travellers are obliged to carry water with them in skins, and when these are exhausted, they sometimes die of thirst.

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.

"And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.

"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

"And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: then he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

"And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the LORD that healeth thee."

"And they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters."

Some modern travellers have thought they could trace the exact route which the Israelites followed. A well, called by the Arabs, "Howara,"

is mentioned by Burckhardt, the water of which is so bitter that neither men nor camels can drink it; and a grove of palm trees by the side of some wells of water, is thought to indicate the ancient station of Elim. Indeed the whole of the route to Sinai was traced by this enterprising traveller, and, making allowance for the lapse of so many centuries, there appears every reason to suppose that the places he visited were the same as those mentioned in the journey of the Israelites.

After resting a month in the delightful station of Elim, the Israelites quitted its wells and palm trees, and "came into the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai."\* It is supposed that the Israelites brought provisions with them out of Egypt, which lasted them until now, when, their stores failing, they for the first time experienced the want of food.

"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when

\* Two wildernesses of Sin occur in the journeys of the Israelites; the one here mentioned near the Red Sea, written Sin,—the other written Zin, which lay to the south of Canaan, near the borders of the Dead Sea. The stations of the Israelites are not all put down; they may be seen on referring to the thirty-third chapter of Numbers. The places in which the Israelites encamped before reaching Sinai can still be traced with apparent accuracy; but with regard to those named between the sojourn at Mount Sinai and Kadesh Barnea, commentators are not agreed as to their situation.

we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

As Moses and Aaron never acted but in obedience to the divine will, to murmur against them was to murmur against God. Yet He forgave the sinful repining of His people, and took compassion on their sufferings: so merciful is He to his creatures, even when they murmur under the wise dispensations of his providence.

"Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." This was "manna," which fell every morning round the camp of the Israelites, in all seasons, and in whatever place they were, during the whole forty years of their sojourn in the wilderness.

Before the manna fell, Moses, by God's command, promised the exhausted Israelites a supply of food; and accordingly, "at even quails came up and covered the camp:\*" and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

\* This was the first gift of quails: another occurs after the Israelites leave Mount Sinai. The quail is a bird of passage, about the size of a pigeon: but the flock of quails here recorded was miraculous; that is, it fell round the camp of the Israelites

"And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna; for they wist not what it was.\* And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat."

"This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded; Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents."

"And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more and some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.

"And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning."

Those who left it until the morning were probably of a covetous disposition, and they were punished; the next morning the manna was full of worms, and not fit to be eaten; and thus it always became when kept, except on the Sabbath.

at the exact time Moses had declared by God's command that it would fall; and so vast was the quantity of birds, as to supply a whole people with food.

\* The word manna signifies, "What is it?"

On that day no manna fell; every man was commanded to rest, and keep the Sabbath holy; and on the Sabbath alone, the manna collected the preceding day remained perfectly good.

“And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations;\* that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.”

“As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

“And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna until they came to the borders of the land of Canaan.”

After this merciful deliverance from the horrors of famine, a deliverance which the Israelites owed immediately to the power of God so wonderfully displayed, we should expect that they would never again have distrusted His Almighty care and goodness. But the Israelites did not yet “know in whom they believed,” and their faith failed under the test of suffering. The following chapter will present another instance of their sinful distrust.

\* An “omer” is a Hebrew measure, containing about six English pints.

## CHAPTER IX.

WATER FROM THE ROCK AT HOREB.

THE AMALEKITES DEFEATED AT REPHIDIM.

JETHRO'S VISIT AND COUNSEL.

THE Israelites quitted the wilderness of Sin, and, after resting at two different stations, reached Rephidim, a place in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai.

Here the Israelites again experienced a dreadful want of water; and again, instead of humbly addressing their prayers to God, they broke forth into murmur and reproaches against Moses. They accused him, as before, of bringing them into the desert to kill them, and their children and their cattle, with thirst; and their rebellion rose to such a height that Moses feared for his life. He endeavoured to reason with them; "Why chide ye with me," he said to the people, "Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" But it was in vain.

"And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in

Horeb;\* and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."

Moses called the name of the place where this miracle was wrought, Massah, or Meribah. Massah means "temptation;" and Meribah, "strife." Another Meribah is mentioned, where the Israelites afterwards murmured in the wilderness of Zin; and this latter is the occasion and place usually referred to under the name of the "waters of Meribah."

Thus were the Israelites again miraculously relieved from a state of extreme distress, by the mercy of God. How thankful must they have been to see the pure fresh water gushing from the rock, and to quench their burning thirst,—knowing that they owed their deliverance to that great and good Being who had promised to be with them, and to bless them so long as they were obedient to his commands.

The next danger to which the Israelites were exposed was of a different kind. They were wantonly attacked by the "Amalekites,"† a war-

\* To the young reader it may be necessary to explain that it does not imply that the Almighty would appear in a visible form to Moses on the rock, but that His power should be with him there, and enable him to work the miracle.

Horeb is supposed, by many Commentators, to be the mountainous district near Mount Sinai, as the frequent expression "*in* Horeb" seems to suggest. By others it is considered to be a distinct summit, or mountain near to Sinai,

† It seems probable that there were more tribes of Amalekites



like nation inhabiting the desert. With no experience in war, and totally unprepared for such an attack, the Israelites were again preserved by the immediate interposition of God. Moses commanded Joshua to choose out such of the people as were capable of fighting, and to go out against the Amalekites; while he himself ascended a hill which overlooked the battle, attended by Aaron and Hur,\* and holding in his hand the rod with which he had worked so many miracles: there, stretching out his hands to heaven, he prayed that the Israelites might be saved from their enemies, and prevail over them.

"And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

"But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people, with the edge of the sword."

The camp of the Amalekites afforded a rich spoil to the conquerors; and thus, instead of injuring the Israelites, they were the means of

than one, and that this tribe was not descended from Amalek the grandson of Esau, but was of earlier origin. The Arabians believe Amalek to have been the son of Ham.—*See Calmet's Dict. of the Bible. Art. Amalekites.*

\* Hur was the husband of Miriam. *See Josephus.*

benefiting them. Such is often the result of the designs of the wicked.

Moses was commanded to write an account of the event in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: he was also commanded to record this prophetic judgment upon Amalek,—“I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.”\* “And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-NISSI;” the name signifies, *The Lord, my banner*.

At Rephidim, Jethro, having heard of all that God had done for Israel, came to see Moses, bringing with him his wife Zipporah, and his two sons Gershom and Eliezer. “And Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent. And Moses told his father-in-law all that the Lord had done unto Pharaoh, and to the Egyptians for Israel’s sake.”

“And Jethro said, Blessed be the Lord who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians.”

“And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron

\* This prophetic denunciation was accomplished more than seven hundred years afterwards, when the Amalekites were utterly destroyed by Hezekiah, king of Judah. Previously to this final conquest, the country was invaded and laid waste by Saul, and again by David; peace never subsisting long between the two nations.

came and all the elders of Israel to eat bread before God."

On the following morning Moses "sate to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening." When Jethro saw this, he remonstrated with Moses, perceiving the fatigue was too great for him to bear; that he recommended him to have assistance, and not judge all the causes of the people himself. Moses listened to the counsel of Jethro, and chose out able men who "judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves."\*

Jethro soon after departed, and returned to his own land.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE TEN COMMANDMENTS GIVEN AT MOUNT SINAI.

#### THE GOLDEN CALF.

AFTER the departure of Jethro, the Israelites raised their tents, and quitting Rephidim, entered the Wilderness of Sinai. The country so called is a lofty mountainous district immediately surrounding Mount Sinai, extending as far as thirty or forty miles. The whole space is covered with

\* Moses appointed rulers over tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands.

hills, between which are fertile valleys, watered with springs and streams of water.\* A vast number of rugged peaks are seen rearing their summits to the clouds, one of the loftiest of which is Mount Sinai; to the foot of which the Israelites were now led. Mount Horeb had already been sanctified by the presence of Jehovah, when He appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush, and sent him to deliver Israel from the cruel oppression of the Egyptians. What God had then declared to Moses, He had brought to pass: with great power and a stretched out arm He had brought forth the people whom he had chosen, and they were now to appear before Him and receive His holy laws. With what awe and reverence, mingled with thankfulness of joy, must the Israelites have approached this sacred spot! They were led to the base of the mountain, where they encamped.

“And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, Ye have seen

\* One of the highest peaks in this range is called by the Arabs at the present day, Djebel Moussa, the mountain of Moses; another is called Oreb. Burckhardt, however, considers that neither of them is Sinal, but Mount Serbal, a single lofty peak in a lower range. A convent was erected by the Empress Helena in a valley at the foot of the mount Saint Catherine, or Oreb, and is still standing and tenanted by monks, whose lives are often in danger from the attacks of the Arabs. There is also a mosque on the mountain, to which Mahomedans make pilgrimages, and offer a sheep in sacrifice, in honour of the memory of Moses.

what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."

"And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD."

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and let them sanctify themselves to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes: And be ready against the third day, for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai."

The dresses of the Israelites were composed of woollen, and were consequently not washed so easily, or frequently, as those made of cotton or linen. Personal cleanliness is essential to health, and more particularly in a hot climate, such as Arabia and Canaan; yet this would, in all pro-

bability, have been disregarded by the Israelites, had they been left to themselves: but by its being made an essential part of their religious observances, and a duty necessary to the obtaining of the favour of God, they were compelled to attend to those rules of life which preserved their health. Thus it will always be found that those habits and dispositions, which the Almighty desires of his creatures as a duty to Himself, are those, without which they cannot themselves be happy.

The usual dress of the Israelites was a long, loose garment reaching to the feet; which they fastened round them with a girdle when about to work, or to walk to any distance: hence the scriptural expression "to have the loins girded" means, to be in a state of activity and preparation, not in repose or idleness.

To preserve the people from the danger of approaching too near Mount Sinai on this awful day, Moses was commanded to make a boundary round it. "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves that ye go not up into the Mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the Mount shall surely be put to death: There shall not an hand touch it but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man it shall not live; when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the Mount."

"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice

of the trumpet exceeding loud ; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God ; and they stood at the nether part of the mount."

" And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire : and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice."

And the Lord called Moses up into the mount, and commanded him to charge the people not to pass the bounds which had been set round the foot of the mountain, lest they should perish. When Moses returned, the Ten Commandments were delivered.

" And God spake all these words, saying,

1st.—"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

2nd.—"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth : Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them ; for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ; and shewing

mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."

3rd.—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

4th.—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it."

5th.—"Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

6th.—"Thou shalt not kill."

7th.—"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

8th.—"Thou shalt not steal."

9th.—"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour."

10th.—"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's."

These Ten Commandments were given to the people amidst thunder and lightning, and the noise of the trumpet, and the smoke of the



mountain; and the people were greatly terrified; and they removed and stood afar off: they earnestly implored Moses that he would receive the laws from God, and they promised faithfully to obey them: "speak thou with us," they said, "and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

"And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

Moses having ascended the mount, and received from God a part of the laws which the Israelites were in future to obey, he returned, and recited them in presence of the people: "And all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do! In memorial of this covenant, by which the people engaged to receive and obey the laws which he should deliver from God, Moses built an altar, and erected twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel; he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord, after which he again ascended the mount, accompanied by Aaron and his two sons, Nadab and Abihu, together with [seventy of the elders. These were permitted to view at a distance the glory of God. They then descended, while Moses returned to receive the Ten Commandments, written upon the tables of stone. Joshua attended him, and he appointed Aaron and Hur to take charge of the people in his absence.

Moses remained in the mount forty days. And when the people saw that he delayed to come down out of the mount, they murmured; and, assembling tumultuously round Aaron, cried, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him."

Aaron does not appear to have resisted the people on this occasion, as he certainly should have done, however violent they might have been. The people were really powerless to injure him, unless God so permitted it, since He sees and knows what is done upon the earth at all times and in all places; therefore, in circumstances ever so alarming, men ought never to feel so much afraid as to do wrong, in order to save their lives. If need be, it is better to die than to be guilty of sin: but it seldom happens that a person is in as much danger as he imagines; for, when under the influence of fear, no one judges calmly and truly of his real situation. The best way of preserving ourselves is, to offer up a short prayer to God for assistance, and, after that, consider only what it is *right* for us to do.

Our young readers will recollect that a prayer may be offered without using any particular posture, or speaking aloud. Kneeling is the proper posture for prayer, because it is reverential, but prayer may be made to God without. Prayer is asking God to assist us in difficulties,

and to bless our endeavours to do His will; thus we ought to refer every thing that occurs to God, and not to think of Him only at stated times: it is a privilege which adds gratitude to every enjoyment, and takes bitterness from every trial.

Aaron yielded to the idolatrous demand of the people. He commanded them to bring their golden earrings, which were worn equally by men and women. Perhaps he gave this command with the view to deter them from their wicked purpose by requiring these ornaments; and out of these he made a molten calf. It was carefully fashioned with a graving tool, and set on high that all the people might see it. And the people cried out, "these be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

And Aaron built an altar before this image of a calf, which he had himself made; and he proclaimed "a feast to the LORD:" and the people rose up early in the morning, "and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings: and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play."

The golden calf appears to have been made in imitation of the Bull Apis, which we before stated, was the chief god of the Egyptians.\* It is scarcely possible to believe that the Israelites thought this golden image had brought them out of Egypt; yet, supposing they did not, but made

\* The Bull Apis was the symbol of Osiris.

it as a representation of the Great Being who had so lately spoken to them from the mount in thunder and lightning, their wickedness was as great; since the second commandment expressly forbade them to worship any graven image whatever; how then could they, without sin, offer sacrifice before the image of an Egyptian god?

God saw the wickedness of the people. His anger was kindled against them. "And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people; and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people: now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them, and I will make of thee a great nation."

How many would have gladly gratified their personal ambition, and have cared little for a people who had treated them with ingratitude! But Moses never appears to have thought of himself: he loved the people, ill as they too often acted towards him; and, instead of accepting the offered greatness for himself, he pleaded for them. He prayed to God to forgive them; and God heard his servant's prayer.

Then Moses took the two tables upon which the ten commandments were written, and descended the mount, followed by Joshua.

"And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables."

"And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he

said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing; and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it."

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him." Moses commanded them, in the name of Jehovah, to go through the camp, and slay the most wicked of the idolaters, without regard to friends, relations, or brothers. This the Levites did, and a great number of the people died.

To punish the idolatry of the Israelites, the Lord declared to Moses that His presence should not go up with them into the Promised Land. Then Moses again interceded for the people; he prayed to God to forgive their great sin, and continue his Holy presence with them.

And he caused the tent, or Tabernacle used for worship, and which stood within the camp, to be removed, and pitched without, afar off.

"And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the Tabernacle, that all the people rose

up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the Tabernacle."

"And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the Tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the Tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses."

"And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the Tabernacle door; and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man at his tent door."

Then Moses again prayed to God to forgive the people, and to go up with them. And God heard the supplication of Moses, and He said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." And Moses further entreated the LORD to shew him his glory. And the LORD said, "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee: and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." But Moses could not see the face of the LORD, for no man can see the face of the LORD and live. Then the Glory of the LORD passed by.

## CHAPTER XI.

## THE TABERNACLE SET UP. CEREMONIES

## APPOINTED.

THE Lord commanded Moses to prepare other two tables, and go up again into the mount: and he did so, and remained there a second time forty days and forty nights: and God proclaimed to Moses His holy name. "And the Lord descended in a cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD."

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

These words ought never to be forgotten. We learn from them how merciful and how good God is to those who love Him, and seek to obey His commands; but the impenitent and careless sinner, who goes on in a course of wickedness, and never thinks of God, nor seeks to please Him, God will surely punish.

"Having received the remainder of the laws,







and particular directions for building the Tabernacle, Moses descended the mount.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him; and Moses talked with them, And afterwards all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with them in Mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off until he came out.”\*

Moses now commanded the people to bring offerings of gold, silver, jewels, embroidered stuffs, skins, spices, oil, and whatever else was required for the building of the Tabernacle. The people cheerfully obeyed; and so much was offered that Moses was obliged to forbid their bringing more. The best workmen in the different arts were then chosen, and every one had a portion of the great work assigned him. Some cut down the acacia trees, and made ready the boards of shittim wood for the Tabernacle;

\* In the paintings of many ancient masters, Moses is represented with rays of light like horns; a mistake originating in the mistranslation in the Latin Vulgate edition of the Bible, (the only one, probably, which they knew), of the passage, “the skin of Moses’ face *shone*,”—the Hebrew word signifying to irradiate from, or, to have rays shooting from the head like horns.—*See Notes to the Pictorial Bible*,

others were employed in carving the ornaments, and making the various utensils to be used in the sacrifices: the women embroidered the curtains, and made the vestments for the priests, many of which were of the choicest and most delicate needle-work; all were employed, and nothing could have exceeded the cheerful activity of the scene.

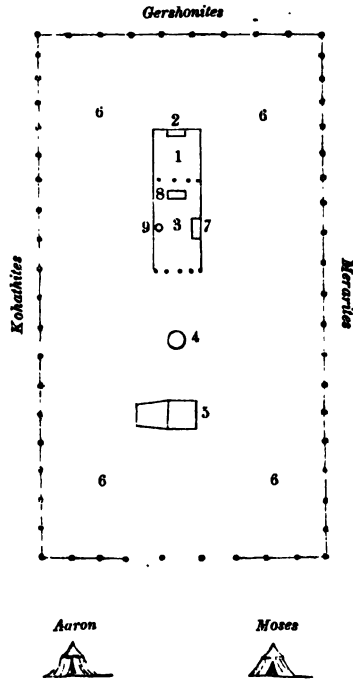
The Tabernacle\* (*see Plate*) stood near the end of an oblong square enclosure, formed by brazen pillars with silver capitals and fillets, having curtains of fine twined linen between. These curtains were suspended on silver cords, fastened to the pillars, and were of net work, in order that the people standing outside, might see the priests offering the sacrifices within the court. The entrance was on the east side, facing the Tabernacle. The curtain over the entrance was different from those which formed the sides, and was richly embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, and wrought with needle-work. Four pillars formed the entrance, on each side of which were three pillars more, which completed the east end. Twenty pillars formed the north side, twenty pillars the south side, and ten the west end.

The Tabernacle† (*see Plate*) which stood within

\* It is generally supposed that the Tabernacle stood near the farther end of the Court, so as to allow a large open space in front, where the sacrifices were offered; but its exact situation within the Court is not mentioned.

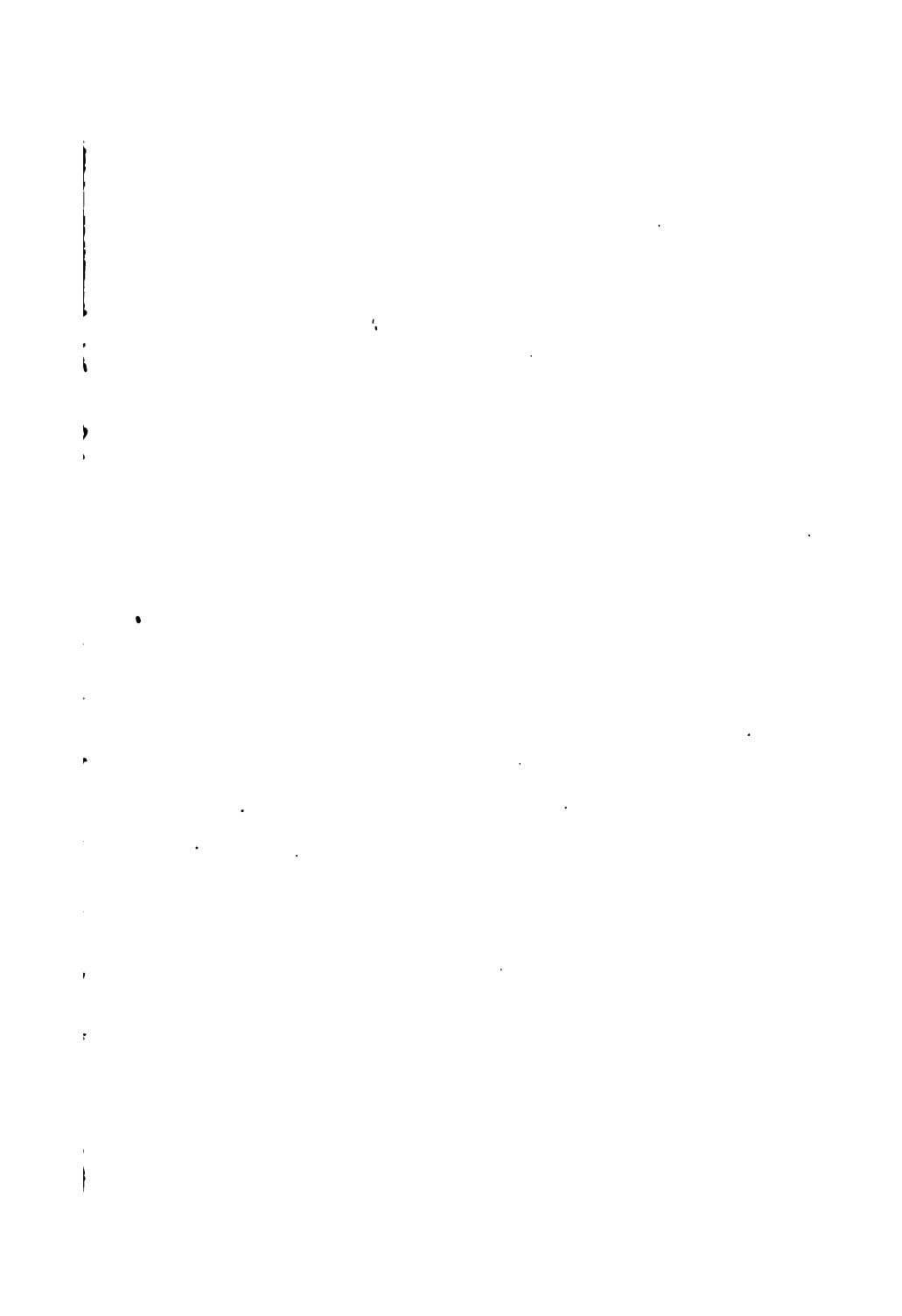
† The length of the Tabernacle was  $52\frac{1}{2}$  feet; breadth and height,  $17\frac{1}{2}$  feet.

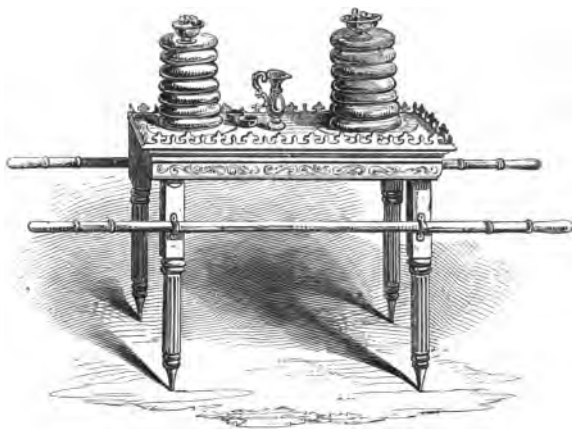
PLAN OF THE COURT OF THE TABERNACLE.



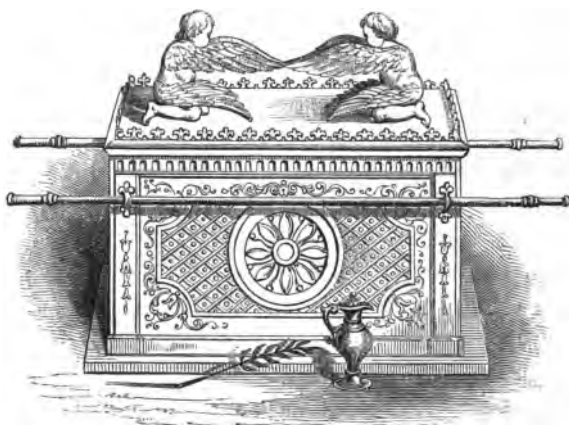
- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. The Holy of Holies.           | 6. The Court of the Tabernacle. |
| 2. The Ark of the Covenant.      | 7. The Table of Shewbread.      |
| 3. The Holy Place.               | 8. The Altar of Incense.        |
| 4. The Laver.                    | 9. The Golden Candlestick.      |
| 5. The Altar of Burnt Offerings. |                                 |







THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD.



THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

this enclosure, was formed of boards of shittim wood, fitting into sockets at the bottom, in such a manner as to stand upright; in this position they were kept firm by bars of wood, which were slipt through rings attached to each board: boards, thus closely united, formed the north and south sides, and the west end: the east end was the entrance, formed by five pillars supporting a richly embroidered curtain, similar to the one which covered the entrance to the court. The boards were overlaid with gold; over them was thrown, first a covering of cloth made of goats' hair;\* next, a covering of rams' skins dyed red; and lastly, one of badgers' skins.† The Tabernacle was hung inside with splendid curtains, richly embroidered in blue, purple and scarlet, and adorned with figures of cherubim: but no figures of animals were allowed to be represented in any part of the work; probably, lest the Israelites should have been led to worship them.

The Tabernacle was divided into two parts; (*see Plan*) one third was separated from the remaining two thirds by four pillars, over which fell a rich curtain or vail, as it is usually called, that completely hid the interior from sight. This inner chamber was the Holy of Holies. It contained only the Ark, or coffer made of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, and surmounted by the

\* The Arabs cover their tents with a cloth, spun by the women out of goats' hair.

† Or, Seal skins.



Mercy Seat, on which were two figures of cherubim; in the Ark were the Tables of the Law. A cloud (the Shekina)\* denoting the presence of Jehovah, rested between the cherubim. Into this sacred place none entered but the High Priest, once a year, on the great day of Atonement.

The front division of the Tabernacle was the Holy Place. On entering it, to the left stood the Golden Candlestick with six branches, each bearing a lighted lamp: these lamps were kept continually burning. (*See Plate.*) Opposite the entrance stood the altar of incense, (*see Plate*) on which the High Priest burnt incense every morning, and every evening; once a year, on the great day of Atonement, the blood of the atoning sacrifice was sprinkled upon the horns (or raised corners,) of the altar. To the right, facing the Golden Candlestick, was the *Table* of Shew Bread: (*see Plate*) upon it stood twelve loaves, one for each of the Twelve Tribes; these were removed every Sabbath, and fresh ones substituted.

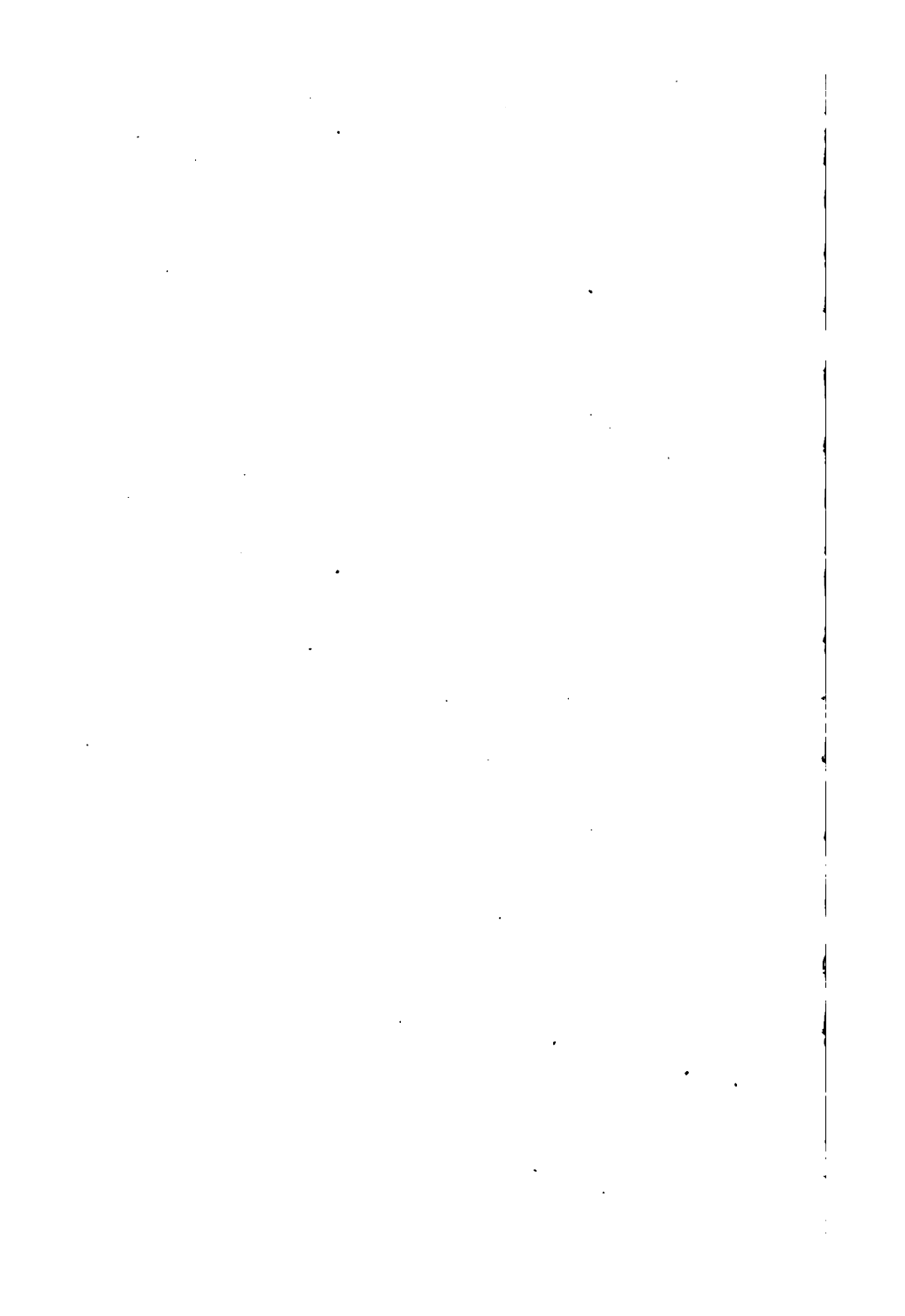
In the court, immediately in front of the Tabernacle, stood the great Brazen Laver, which was kept constantly filled with water for the priests to wash in, whilst engaged in the services of sacrifice and worship.

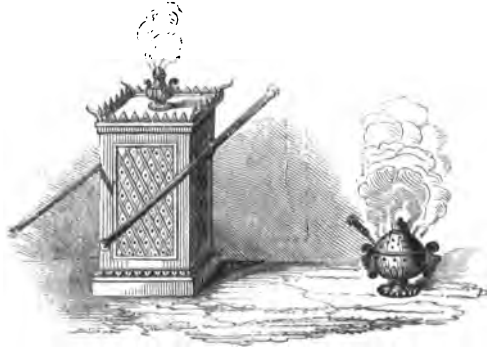
Between the Laver and the entrance of the court, stood the Altar of Burnt Offerings. (*See Plate.*) It was made of shittim wood, overlaid

\* An idea of a radiance, or glory, a mild effulgence, seems to be always annexed to it.—*Calmet*.

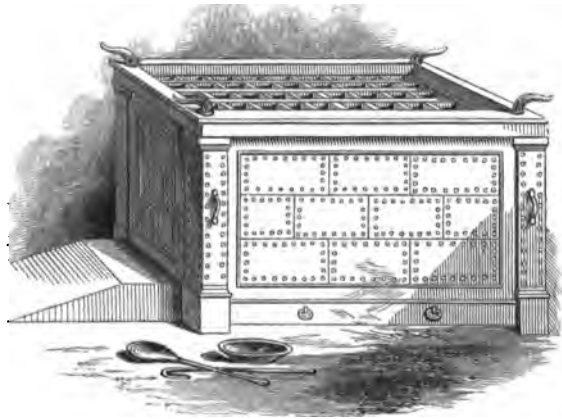


THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK.





THE ALTAR OF INCENSE.



THE ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERINGS.



with brass; the form of it was square, and its centre was covered with a brass grating, through which the ashes fell. A slope led up to the altar, by which the priests ascended to offer the sacrifices.

The Tribe of Levi was selected to perform all the ordinary services required in the Tabernacle, but the charge of offering the sacrifices devolved exclusively upon the family of Aaron and their descendants; these latter were more properly denominated Priests, the others Levites. The dress of the Priests was rich and magnificent, suitable to the dignity and honour of their employment.

The high priest (*see Plate*) wore a long robe of fine linen reaching to the wrists. Over this he put on the robe of the ephod, a blue garment, without sleeves, and woven in one piece, an opening being left for the head, and two others for the arms. Round the edge of the border were pomegranates and golden bells, which sounded whenever the priest moved. Over the robe of blue was worn the ephod: this was of plain linen for the common priests, but the ephod of the High Priest was richly embroidered with purple, scarlet, blue, and gold; it was formed of two pieces, fastened on the shoulders by two large precious stones, having the names of the tribes inscribed upon them: six on one, and six on the other. The ephod was confined round the waist, by a girdle of needlework, richly and curiously embroidered.

The most sacred ornament of the High Priest was the breast-plate. This was a square piece of cloth of gold, in which were set twelve precious stones, in four rows. The names of the tribes were engraved upon them, in their order, one on each stone. Four small gold chains, attached to the four corners, fastened the breast-plate to the shoulders and the girdle. The sacred Urim and Thummim was contained in the breast-plate, by which the High Priest was enabled to learn the will of God; but in what manner this knowledge was communicated by it we do not know. A rich mitre, or turban, composed of folds of linen, completed the magnificent dress of the High Priest; in front, was a small plate of pure gold, bearing engraved upon it the words, "HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

The dresses of the common priests were less costly and splendid, though still rich and beautiful. (*See Plate.*) They wore a simple linen ephod, and on festivals an embroidered coat reaching to the feet, confined by a girdle wound two or three times round the body: their head dress was similar in form to the High Priest's, but without the gold plate. This dress the High Priest also wore, excepting on days of ceremony. All had sandals on their feet, which they took off whilst officiating.

**THE SACRIFICES.** Every morning and evening a lamb, without blemish, was offered on the altar of burnt offering, as a token of repentance and thanksgiving for the whole nation: a small



HIGH PRIEST.







HIGH PRIEST ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.





COMMON PRIEST.





HIGH PRIEST ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.





COMMON PRIEST.





quantity of flour, oil, and wine, was offered with it for a meat offering, and a drink offering; the whole was completely consumed, except the skin of the animal, which belonged to the priests. On the Sabbath, two lambs were offered morning and evening, and a double quantity of flour, oil and wine.\*

Incense was also burnt upon the altar of incense in the Holy Place, every morning and evening.

Besides this continual or daily sacrifice, there were other burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, and peace-offerings, appointed for different occasions. Some were to make atonement for having committed sin; either for an individual, or for the whole nation: these were sin-offerings. If a man had broken any one of the ceremonial laws, he brought his offering to the priest, confessed his sin, and the priest had power to pronounce his pardon. The offering differed according to the offence, and also according to the wealth of the offerer: it might be a bullock, a sheep, a goat, a pigeon, or only a small quantity of oil, or flour. No part of this sin-offering returned to the person who offered it: it was partly consumed on the altar, and part was the portion of the priest who offered it.

The peace-offerings were presented on various occasions, to express a sense of gratitude for God's goodness: these also consisted either of animals, or oil, frankincense, flour, &c., according to the inclination and ability of the offerer. Of

\* Exod. xlix. 38. Numb. xxviii. 3—10.

these, a part was burnt on the altar, a part given to the priests, and the remainder returned to the offerer, to serve as a feast to him, and his family and friends; but it was not to be kept longer than two days at farthest: if eaten on the third day, the sacrifice was accounted as worse than not offered; it was a sin.

Meat-offerings usually attended the burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, and sin-offerings; though they were also offered alone, and were then voluntary. The meat-offering consisted of flour, oil, frankincense, cakes, &c.: a small portion was consumed on the altar; the remainder was eaten by the priests within the precincts of the Tabernacle.

Drink-offerings were never offered alone: they consisted of wine.

It should be carefully observed, that these sacrifices did not exempt the offerer from the punishment due to crime. If a man stole, he was obliged to restore what he had stolen, and many fold more with it. If a man wilfully murdered another, he was put to death; and if he injured another, he was obliged to make reparation: the sacrifices were enjoined chiefly for breaking the ceremonial law, and for offences unintentionally or carelessly committed, and also to express the inward repentance of the heart towards God, after the offender had suffered the due punishment of his crime, as appointed by law. If the offering was an animal, the offerer laid his hand upon its head, confessed his sin,

and asked forgiveness of God: he was then pardoned in His name by the priest.

THE FEASTS.\*—Three principal feasts were appointed, at which times all the men were to appear before God. When settled in the land of Canaan, the Israelites were to leave their usual habitations and come up to Jerusalem to worship; and, as this left the country, which was surrounded by enemies, unprotected, God promised that they should never be invaded during their feasts, and that “no man should desire their land,” when they went up to appear before the LORD, thrice a-year. This promise was remarkably fulfilled; and, in the whole course of their history, the Israelites were never attacked during their absence at Jerusalem.

The Feast of the Passover was the greatest and most important of their festivals. It commemorated their deliverance from Egypt, when the Angel of Death *passed over* their doors, and slew the first-born of the Egyptians: it lasted seven days, and was kept nearly in the manner described in the seventh chapter. The feast commenced at the full moon in the month of March: the next fifty days (or seven weeks) were occupied with getting in the harvest, and then followed the Feast of Pentecost.

The Feast of Pentecost† commemorated the giving of the Law from Mount Sinai, which

\* Levit. xxiii. Exod. xxiii. 14.

† Called also the Feast of Weeks; the Feast of Harvest; and the Feast of the First Fruits.

place the Israelites reached fifty days after leaving Egypt. This may be considered as a sort of national harvest-home: the corn was gathered in, and the people remembered with thankfulness the time when their government as a nation commenced, and when God had promised them the blessings they then enjoyed.

The Feast of Tabernacles took place in the autumn: it was to remind the Israelites of their being brought in safety through the wilderness, and entering the Promised Land: they erected booths with branches of trees, in which they dwelt during the feast, in order to recall the time when they lived in tents in the desert. The vintage was also just gathered, which is a season of mirth and rejoicing in those countries where the vine grows in abundance in the open air, and which, being thus joined to the recollections of their past wanderings, must have added to the peaceful and cheerful enjoyment of the festival. Each of these feasts lasted seven days; they tended strongly to bind the different tribes to each other, and to make them feel that they were all one nation, separated from the rest of the world by their religion, and the peculiar privileges it conferred upon them, so long as they obeyed its precepts.

Besides the three great Feasts there were others, such as the New Moons, the Feast of Trumpets, and the weekly Sabbaths, which we shall not describe minutely: it is only necessary to state, that every great national event, and

every annual blessing, was commemorated by some sacrifice or feast, expressive of gratitude to God for having bestowed it.

There was one general fast appointed, and only one; this was on the great day of Atonement, when the High Priest made an atonement for the sins of the nation during the year. On this solemn day, two goats were presented before the altar; lots were drawn, and one of the animals was sacrificed as a sin-offering: the other was the Scape-goat. A bullock was offered as a sin-offering for the High Priest himself. On this occasion it was that he entered within the vail of the Holy of Holies. Taking a censer of burning coals and incense in his hand, he first lighted the incense, which rose in a cloud over the Mercy-seat, and then sprinkled the blood of his own sin-offering before the Mercy-seat. He afterwards returned to the court, killed the sin-offering for the people, and, again entering the Holy of Holies, sprinkled the blood of that also before the Mercy-seat in the same manner. This done, and the altar of incense having been anointed, the sin-offerings were carried without the court, and there entirely consumed.

The High Priest then brought forth the Scape-goat, and laying his hands upon its head, confessed upon it the sins of the whole nation; after which the goat was sent away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness;\* where it was

\* In later times, the goat was led to a place twelve miles

let go, "to bear the iniquities of the people to a land not inhabited."

**THE LEVITES.**—The tribe of Levi were accepted by God to redeem the first-born which had been sanctified to him, when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. They had no separate district assigned them in the Promised Land, but were to remain distinct, as the hereditary priests of the nation. Four cities in the territories of each of the other tribes, with a portion of land round, were allotted to them for their residence, when not engaged in the service of the Tabernacle. They were supported by a tenth of the produce of the whole country: they were allowed to bear arms; but their chief business was to instruct the people in the law; besides which many of them were judges, scribes or lawyers, and probably physicians.

At this time, war and agriculture were the chief occupations of men; and learning, even of the commonest kind, was very generally neglected: without a separate order of men, whose employments called for a higher degree of mental cultivation, it is probable that the people would have become increasingly ignorant, and that learning would have soon been entirely lost. In other times and countries, the establishment of a priesthood had this good effect; but frequently the priests gained an excessive power, which became an evil: the Levites alone, by being forbidden to

distant from Jerusalem, and there thrown down a steep rock; perhaps, because there was no land "not inhabited" near.

hold land, never acquired too great an influence in the state; while they preserved a taste for higher objects and pursuits among the people.

**CITIES OF REFUGE.** Six of the cities of the Levites were Cities of Refuge. If a man killed another by accident, or in a sudden fit of passion, he might fly to these cities, where he was safe from the instant vengeance of the relations of the deceased. In these early times, and indeed long after, when a man was slain, his nearest relation thought himself bound in honour never to forgive the murderer, but pursue and kill him. By providing Cities of Refuge, such hasty vengeance was prevented, while the punishment of an intentional murder was secured; for the slayer was tried, and if found guilty, was given up to justice, and put to death. If, on the contrary, he was not guilty of deliberate murder, he resided in the City of Refuge until the death of the High Priest, when he was free. To be thus forced to quit his home and occupations, was in itself a heavy punishment, and, being certain, would tend to check violence and inconsiderate passion, far more than an uncertain and cruel act of private revenge.

Two other institutions require to be mentioned, namely, the Sabbatical year, and the year of Jubilee.

The Sabbatical year was a year of rest for the land. Every seventh year the ground was to remain untilled; no crops were to be sown, and yet the people were not to suffer from famine;



an abundant harvest being promised every sixth year, sufficient to supply the people amply during the seventh and eighth years.

After seven times seven years, came the fiftieth year, called the Year of Jubilee. On this anniversary, the land returned to the possession of the original tribe and family to whom it belonged. No man could sell his land for more than the number of years to elapse between his selling it and the year of Jubilee; so that it was impossible for any family or tribe to acquire more than a just share of landed property; by this simple and wise regulation, the Israelites, were preserved from the miseries attending upon great inequalities of wealth. The republics of Greece and Rome were frequently brought to the verge of ruin by the discontents of those who were in abject poverty, and the oppression and ambition of the rich; from these disorders the Israelites never suffered.

The Jubilee was also a year of release to all bondsmen. An Israelite might hire himself to serve another; but he must be free on the year of Jubilee.

No Israelite was to take interest for money which he lent to an Israelite: he might take it from a stranger, but he was to assist his countrymen freely, if they were in distress, and not make a gain of them.

These are some of the chief ritual laws given to the Israelites at Mount Sinai: they all had one object, which was to make the people

happy and virtuous, by keeping them from idolatry, and prepare them to receive the New and Better Covenant by our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose Advent the sacrifices were to cease. It is necessary to remember, that, at this time, all nations, except the Israelites, worshipped false gods. These false gods were thought to have committed many crimes themselves, and therefore it was natural for their worshippers to do the same: thus idolatry was not only absurd, and foolish, but it was, in the highest possible degree, wicked. Intoxication was a frequent accompaniment of heathen worship, and was even considered obligatory in some religious rites. One of their divinities was a god of thieves; another was thought to take pleasure in human sacrifices, more particularly young children; and the more their parents loved them, the greater merit it was considered in the father or mother, to give them up to be burnt before the idol! Moloch, which was worshipped by the Ammonites, a nation on the borders of Canaan, was a frightful statue of a man with the head of an ox; its arms were stretched out over a furnace of fire, as if ready to hold what was given to it. Inside the arms was a secret spring, which, when the offerer laid the victim upon them, suddenly gave way, and dropped the shrieking child into the fire!

Such scenes are too horrible to dwell upon; but some few particulars of the idolatrous customs which once prevailed, ought to be known,

that we may understand why idolatry was so strictly forbidden to the Israelites, and also feel more deeply how much we ourselves owe to God, for having kept the knowledge of Himself in the world. But for His revelations to mankind, first by Moses and the Prophets, and afterwards by Our Saviour Jesus Christ, we might now have been as wicked, and as wretched, as the worshippers of Moloch.

When every thing was completed, Moses reared the Tabernacle. And "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle."

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## CHAPTER XII.

NADAB AND ABIHU. THE ISRAELITES LEAVE  
MOUNT SINAI. SECOND GIFT OF QUAILS.  
SEDITION OF AARON AND MIRIAM.

WHEN the Tabernacle was reared, and the first sacrifice laid upon the Altar of Burnt Offerings, fire descended from heaven and consumed it: this sacred fire was kept burning, and never suffered to be extinguished, and was appointed to be used in all the services of the Tabernacle worship.

Nadab and Abihu, the two eldest sons of Aaron, knew of this command respecting the

sacred fire, and yet dared to disobey it. They took their censers, and offered *strange* fire before the Lord; that is, not the sacred fire. They either did this wilfully, knowing that hereby they transgressed the command of God, or, as seems most probable from what follows, they were intoxicated with wine, and did not know what they were doing.\* We can hardly determine which was the greater crime, and it was instantly punished.

“And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.”

“Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.”

Aaron felt that the punishment of his sons was just, and he did not murmur at God's will: but he was a father, and he could not speak in answer to Moses.

“And Moses called Mishael and Elzaphan, the sons of Uzziel the uncle of Aaron, and said unto them, Come near, carry your brethren from before the sanctuary out of the camp. So they went near, and carried them in their coats out of the camp; as Moses had said.”

\* Levit. x. 9, 10. “And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, “Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generation; and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean.”

Moses commanded Eleazer and Ithamar, the brothers of Nadab and Abihu, not to rend their clothes and uncover their heads,\* or show any outward sign of mourning; since the death of their brothers was not a common death, but a punishment sent by God, and was not, therefore, to be publicly mourned, however great their private sorrow might be.

The sacrifices, accordingly, continued; but when they were concluded, Moses found that the part of the sin-offering belonging to the priests, had not been eaten in the court of the Tabernacle, as was appointed, but the whole had been burnt. And he remonstrated with Aaron and his sons, saying, "ye should indeed have eaten it in the holy place, as I commanded." But Aaron touchingly replied, "Behold, this day have they offered their sin-offering and their peace-offering before the Lord, and such things have befallen me; and if I had eaten this sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the Lord?" Aaron repressed his grief, and appeared calm; but he could not take food, or eat of the sacrifice which his sons had died while offering. God never requires us not to feel sorrow in affliction. He only forbids our murmuring at what He sees fit to do, and commands us to trust

\* Tearing the clothes was a customary sign of mourning with the Israelites, and sometimes they shaved their heads; but "not to uncover their heads" means here, probably, that they were not to take off the turban of linen the priests wore whilst officiating, but to continue their services as usual.

in His goodness, and believe that all is best as He appoints, although we may not see it at the time.

In consequence of the death of Nadab and Abihu, Eleazer, their brother, succeeded to the office of High Priest at Aaron's death.

The Priests were henceforth forbidden to taste wine, before performing their duties in the Tabernacle.

The Israelites had remained nearly a year in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, when the cloud was taken up which rested upon the tabernacle, and gave the signal that they were to re-commence their journeyings. Then Moses took the silver trumpets, and, blowing an alarm upon them, the tribe of Judah, followed by Issachar and Zebulun raised their tents, and set forward on their march. These tribes were followed by the Levite families of Gershon and Merari, bearing the curtains and boards of the tabernacle: to them succeeded the three tribes from the south, Reuben, Simeon, and Gad; immediately following came the Kohathites, the remaining family of Levites, accompanied by Moses and Aaron, and bearing the sanctuary; the Levites who preceded having thus had time to rear the Tabernacle, before the arrival of the sacred Ark. Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin came next, and the rear was brought up with the tribes of Dan, Asher, and Naphtali.

The same order was observed in all the encampments of the Israelites. Immediately

round the court of the Tabernacle, were pitched the tents of the Levites, as being the tribe consecrated to its service. They were divided into three families, according to their descent from the three sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; they took charge of every thing belonging to the Tabernacle, taking it down when about to remove, and rearing it again when the people encamped. The most exact order prevailed in their several offices; the Gershonites had the care of the curtains, the Merarites of the boards and pillars, while the Kohathites, at the head of whom was Eleazer, the son of Aaron, had the more sacred office of bearing the Ark, the altars, the vessels of gold, and all things used in the service of the Tabernacle. The Levites alone were permitted to touch any part of the holy edifice; and death was the punishment if any other Israelite attempted to perform their office.

“And they departed from the Mount of the LORD three days journey: and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting place for them. And the cloud of the LORD was upon them by day, when they went out of the camp. And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, “Rise up, LORD, and let their enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.” And when it rested, he said, “Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.”

In this manner the Israelites pursued their journey through the desert, and passing by Taberah,\* encamped at a place afterwards called Kibroth Hataavah. Here the people murmured because they had no flesh to eat. They loathed the manna, and said, "We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick. But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes."

"And Moses said unto the LORD, wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant, and wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me."

"Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people, for they weep unto me saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me."

"And the LORD said unto Moses, gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of Israel, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the

\* At Taberah the people murmured; and, in consequence, fire broke out in the camp, which was stayed at the prayer of Moses.



people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone."

"And say thou unto the people, sanctify yourselves against to-morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, who shall give us flesh to eat? for it was well with us in Egypt; therefore the LORD will give you flesh and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days; but even a whole month," until it be loathesome unto you: "because ye have despised the LORD which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, why came we forth out of Egypt?"

"And Moses said, The people among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen: and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them; or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? And the LORD said unto Moses, Is the LORD's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."

The food came as foretold. Quails fell a second time round the camp in extraordinary abundance, and continued thus for a month. The people, disregarding the threatened punishment of their crime, ate greedily of the flesh, fell sick, and numbers died.

The appointment of the seventy elders, relieved Moses in part from the burden of governing the

people; and this council of elders is considered by the Jews to be the origin of their Sanhedrim: but there is no mention of this famous tribunal till after the return from the captivity.

From Kibroth Hattaavah the Israelites moved on to Hazeroth, where another rebellion broke out against Moses. This was more afflictive than any former one; for it was not caused by the idle murmuring of a fickle people, but arose from unkind and jealous feelings, in those who ought to have been his support and comfort. Miriam, jealous of the wife of Moses, whose rank in the tribes would no doubt be superior, or at least equal, to her own, and Aaron, probably urged on by her, spake against Moses, and said, "Hath the Lord indeed only spoken by Moses, hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it."

Then Moses, Miriam and Aaron were suddenly commanded to appear before the Tabernacle: and the cloud stood in the door of the Tabernacle; and a voice from the cloud reproved the murmurings of Miriam and Aaron. When the cloud departed from the Tabernacle, "behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow. And Aaron looked upon Miriam, and behold, she was leprous."

"And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead." Immediately, Moses, who appears never to have resented an injury offered to himself, prayed unto God

that He would heal her; his forgiving prayer was heard, and Miriam was restored: but she was shut out from the camp seven days, like a common leper, and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

**SPIES SENT TO VIEW CANAAN. THE ISRAELITES  
MURMUR AND RETURN INTO THE WILDERNESS.**

**THE SABBATH BREAKER STONED.**

THE Israelites proceeded from Hazeroth to Kadesh Barnea, a place on the borders of the desert, situated to the south of the Promised Land. Their toil now seemed to be over, and their reward was in sight; but before entering a strange country inhabited by hostile nations, Moses was commanded to send spies to view the land. Twelve men were accordingly selected, one from each tribe, who were to go up and see the land, what it was, and the people that dwelt therein, whether they were strong or weak, few or many; and what the land was, whether it was fat or lean, and whether the inhabitants dwelt in tents or strongholds; and they were to bring some of the fruit, for it was the time of the first ripe grapes.

The spies were forty days absent, passing through the whole country of Canaan, from the wilderness of Zin to Hamath. They gathered some fruit in the valley of Eshcol, figs, pomegranates and grapes; and they hung a bunch of the grapes across a pole, which two men carried between them.

As soon as the spies returned, the people gathered together to hear their report. They showed the fruit; but ten of the spies murmured and said, "We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless, the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and, moreover, we saw the children of Anak\* there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south; and the Hittites, and Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan."

"And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

"But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."

And they gave an evil report of the land, declaring "it was a land that eat up the inhabitants thereof;" by which they meant that the soil was so poor, that it did not produce food sufficient for

\* The children of Anak were men of unusual stature, and are elsewhere styled giants.

those who lived there : they also declared that all the people they saw were men of great stature, giants, compared with whom they were in their own sight as grasshoppers : by these false accounts (for the country was remarkable for its fertility) they succeeded in terrifying the assembled people, and made them more afraid of the power of men, than of God.

All that night, the camp of the Israelites was filled with lamentation and weeping, and in the morning they broke forth into murmurs and discontents. "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt," they exclaimed, "Would that we had died in the wilderness." "Wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey : were it not better for us to return into Egypt ? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt."

"Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel." And Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes, and spake unto the people, saying, "the land which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us ; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land ; for they are bread for us : their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us ; fear them not."

But the people would not hearken to Joshua and Caleb; they "bade stone them with stones;" when, at that instant, "the glory of the Lord appeared in the Tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel."

And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with a pestilence, and disinherit them; and will make of thee a nation, greater and mightier than they.

Nevertheless, when Moses again pleaded for the people, God did not destroy them; "And the Lord said, I have pardoned, according to thy word."

But, as a punishment for their so often repeated murmurings, the Israelites were forbidden to enter the Promised Land: they were commanded to turn back into the wilderness, there to wander forty years, a year for every day which the spies had been in Canaan; and it was declared that, during this time, every man above twenty years of age should die, excepting Joshua and Caleb. The ten unfaithful spies were suddenly destroyed by a plague, "and they died before the Lord."

When the people heard their sentence, they mourned greatly; but they mourned for the disappointment of their hopes of entering the Promised Land, and not for having sinned against God; for early the following morning,

they again assembled tumultuously, and declared to Moses that they would go up into the land which the Lord had promised them.

“And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? But it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you: that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you.”

The people, however, persisted in going up: but Moses remained in the camp, with the Ark of the covenant, and the power of Jehovah went not with the disobedient Israelites: the people were defeated and driven back by the Canaanites, and many of them were slain: they then returned to their obedience, and commenced their reluctant march back to the desert.

The death of the Sabbath-breaker occurred about this time.

“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks, brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done with him.”

“And the Lord said unto Moses, the man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.”

All the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses."

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE REBELLION OF KORAH, DATHAN AND ABIRAM.

THE discontent of the Israelites was not yet entirely subdued; and soon after leaving Kadesh Barnea, fresh murmurings broke out against Moses and Aaron. Korah, of the tribe of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram of the tribe of Reuben, complained that Moses and Aaron had usurped the supreme command. This was not true; since it was by the express appointment of God, that Moses was the leader, and Aaron the High Priest of the nation; but when men give way to jealous and angry feelings, they seldom speak or think the truth.

Korah, who was a Levite, but not of Aaron's family, and therefore not a priest,\* laid claim to the priesthood; Dathan and Abiram, being descended from Reuben, the eldest of Jacob's sons, desired to have equal authority with Moses in the government.†

\* The Priests alone offered the sacrifices.

† Reuben had been disinherited of his birthright by Jacob his father. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel."



Two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown, joined in the rebellion.

“And when Moses heard it, he fell upon his face. And he spake unto Korah and unto all his company, saying, Even to-morrow the LORD will show who are his, and who is holy; and will cause him to come near unto him: even him whom he hath chosen will he cause to come near unto him. This do; take your censers, Korah, and all his company, and put fire therein, and incense in them before the LORD to-morrow; and it shall be that the man whom the LORD doth choose, he shall be holy; ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.” “Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself to do the service of the Tabernacle of the LORD, and to stand before the congregation, to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee; and seek ye the priesthood also?”

On the morrow, Korah, attended by his company of two hundred and fifty princes, stood before the door of the Tabernacle, together with Moses and Aaron, each with a censer in his hand. Dathan and Abiram refused to quit their tents. Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the Tabernacle. And God commanded Moses to go to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, and desire all the Israelites to separate themselves from

them: Then Moses went, and all the people who had not joined Dathan and Abiram in their rebellion quitted their tents; and they were left alone.

And Moses said to the people, "If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men, then the LORD hath not sent me; But if the LORD make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the LORD."

As Moses ceased speaking, the ground clave asunder that was under them, and Dathan and Abiram, with all that belonged to them, and the goods that belonged to Korah, were swallowed up. Korah and his company were, at the same instant, destroyed by fire, which came out from the LORD, and utterly consumed them.

The brazen censers, which these men had used, were converted into bread-plates for a covering of the altar, to be a memorial to the Israelites that no stranger, not of the family of Aaron, should offer incense before the Lord.

Yet the people murmured, because of the death of these wicked men, And God caused a plague to break forth among them, and great numbers died: and Aaron took his censer, and hastened to make an atonement for their sin, "and he stood between the living and the dead, and the plague was stayed."

## CHAPTER XV.

## AARON'S ROD BUDDETH.

“AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod, according to the house of their fathers, of all their princes, according to the house of their fathers twelve rods; write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi; for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers. And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.\* And it shall come to pass, that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.”

Moses did as God commanded him: the rods were brought into the Tabernacle, and laid before the Ark. “And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the Tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.”

The rod of Aaron was preserved, and laid up in the Tabernacle; and from this time the right of the Levites to the priesthood, and to perform all the services of religion, was never disputed.

\* Where God's power would be made manifest.

We are now arrived at the termination of the first series of the journies of the Israelites in the desert. Thirty-eight years elapsed before they again set forth on their way to the Promised Land, during which time they abode in the desert; and all that generation, excepting Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, died.\* Miriam died, and was buried at Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin, immediately before the commencement of their second journey, the history of which will commence in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### WATER FROM THE ROCK AT MERIBAH.

#### AARON DIES ON MOUNT HOR.

At the expiration of eight and thirty years, the Israelites once more resumed their journey to the Promised Land, by a different route. Instead of entering by the south from Kadesh Barnea, they made a circuit, and approached the Jordan by the country of Moab. During their long abode in the wilderness, the generation

\* The names of the stations of the Israelites, during this period, being different from those which now designate these places, it is difficult to know where the Israelites spent the time between leaving Kadesh Barnea, and again setting off from Kadesh, (another Kadesh in the Desert of Zin), or whether they ever removed far from it. It is conjectured, however, that they returned to the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, where the

which left Egypt died, and their sons succeeded in their place; these were more inclined to habits of obedience, from having lived under a regular and divinely-instituted government, for so many years; they were likewise inured to toil, and accustomed to a life of activity and labour. They were not, however, free from the prevailing sin of their fathers, a want of faith and confidence in God; the first two events recorded in their march, are instances of their sinful discontent.

At a place in Kadesh, where the Israelites encamped, afterwards called Meribah in Kadesh, or Kadesh-Meribah, there was no water.\* Instead of asking help of God, who had graciously promised, at all times, to hear their prayers, the people murmured against Moses and Aaron. "And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them."

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto

country, for thirty miles, is hilly and fruitful, and well supplied with water. It is also calculated that the conquests of Sesostris, king of Egypt, took place at this time, from whose power they were thus secured by their secluded position in the fastnesses of the desert.

\* Kadesh signifies, *holy* or *sacred*. It is here thought, by some, to be the same as the Desert of Zin, or the Desert of Paran. See *Culmet*.

the rock before their eyes: and it shall give forth water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink."

In this one instance, the faith and obedience of Moses failed. He assembled the people, and took the rod as he was commanded; but instead of reverently working the great miracle which they were divinely directed to perform, Moses and Aaron gave way to their angry feelings against the murmuring people, and struck the rock whilst under the influence of passion. "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" This was not language fitting the servants of God, in the act of performing a miracle by His command.

"And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice." Moses was commanded to *speak* to the rock, not to strike it; "and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also."

As a punishment for this sin, Moses and Aaron were not to enter the Promised Land. The place was henceforth called Meribah.

From Kadesh Moses sent messengers to the King of Edom, demanding permission for the Israelites to pass through his land. He promised that the people should "go by the king's high way," not through the vineyards or fields, that they should not drink of the water of the wells, and should pay for whatever provisions they received. But the king of Edom refused to

suffer them to pass through his land. And as the Edomites were descended from Esau, the brother of Jacob, the Israelites were forbidden to make war upon them. Mount Seir, the country of the Edomites, lay directly in the way of their march: the Israelites were therefore obliged to make a long circuit round the mountain, passing between it and the eastern arm of the Red Sea. On the way, Aaron died at Mount Hor. "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, "Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah, Take Aaron and Eleazer his son, and bring them up unto Mount Hor. And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazer his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people, and shall die there."

"And Moses did as the Lord commanded; and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazer his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount; and Moses and Eleazer came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel."

The tomb of Aaron is still pointed out to travellers by the Arabs, by whom his memory

is held in honour; and its situation on the summit of a mountain in Seir, near to Petra exactly agrees with the account in Numbers. In 1812, Burckhardt approached within sight of it, to the foot of the mountain, in the disguise of an Arab; but the treacherous and savage character of the tribes which inhabit Idumea, render it scarcely possible for the most adventurous and least scrupulous traveller to examine it. Since Burckhardt's attempt, however, a French traveller, M. Laborde succeeded in visiting Petra and the tomb. In the latter there is little to interest: it is shown by an old Arab sheik, who lives in a cavern at the top of the mount.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

#### SIHON AND OG SLAIN. BALAAM.

THE Israelites continued their journey from Mount Hor southward, towards the Red Sea. Led by the pillar of cloud which preceded their march, they quitted the mountainous district of Edom, passed by the head of the Red Sea near Elath, and, turning again northward, came into the country of Moab. Discouraged with the length of the way, they broke out into fresh murmurings; they loathed the manna, and complained of having been brought into the wilderness to perish. For



this they were punished by a plague of Serpents, which bit the people, and a great number died. On their repenting, Moses was commanded to make a Serpent of brass, and set it on a pole in the midst of the camp, when all the people who looked upon it were cured.

The Israelites passed peaceably through this part of the land of the Moabites, whom they were commanded not to injure nor attack. From Moab they sent messengers to demand permission to pass in like manner through the country of the Amorites; but their demand was refused. Sihon, king of the Amorites, assembled his forces and attacked the Israelites; a battle was fought, in which the latter were completely victorious; and the country of the Amorites became theirs. Heshbon was its principal city, which afterwards fell to the tribe of Reuben.

Og, king of Bashan, whose territories lay to the north of the Amorites, next opposed the Israelites. He was of the race of giants, and is said to have had an iron bedstead, nine cubits long.\* But his gigantic strength was of no avail against the chosen people of God: his army was entirely defeated, and his land fell to the possession of the Israelites.

After the defeat of Sihon, the Israelites entered the plains of Moab, on the borders of the Jordan. Balak, king of the Moabites, having seen the destruction of Sihon and Og, became

\* Or nine feet. There are two cubits, the natural and the sacred: the sacred cubit is 1ft. 9in.

alarmed, and resolved no longer to suffer the Israelites to proceed; although he feared to attack them openly. Having sent to the Midianites to assist him, they agreed to despatch messengers to Balaam, a prophet, who lived on the banks of the Euphrates, and who was famous throughout the country, to come and curse the Israelites, as they lay encamped. Accordingly, the princes of Moab and Midian took presents with them, and came to Pethor, where Balaam lived, and delivered the message of Balak.

Balaam appears to have had a knowledge of the true God, and to have known that his own power of pronouncing a blessing or a curse, depended upon His will. On receiving Balak's message, he desired the princes to wait until the morrow, that he might know from the Lord whether he should go.

And God commanded Balaam not to go. "Thou shalt not curse the people, for they are blessed." Then Balaam dismissed the princes, and they returned to Balak.

But the king of Moab was resolved to persuade Balaam, if possible, to curse the Israelites; and accordingly he sent other princes to him, more honourable than the first, and loaded with more costly presents.

"And they came to Balaam and said to him, Thus saith Balak the son of Zippor, let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me, For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever, thou sayest unto me :

come, therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people."

"And Balaam answered, and said unto the servants of Balak, if Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more." Balaam desired the princes to remain that night, that he might know of the LORD if he should accompany them. It is evident from the whole history that Balaam was of an avaricious, covetous disposition: he wished to obtain the riches and honours which Balak promised him; and fear alone prevented his going to curse the Israelites, although he knew that God had blessed them.

In the night, Balaam was again directed what to do, and a sign given him. "If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou say." Balaam, however, eager to gratify his secret wishes, and to comply with Balak's invitation and advantageous offer, appears not to have waited for the men to call him, but "rose up in the morning, and saddled his ass, and went with the princes of Moab."

On the road, Balaam was reproved for his perverseness, and again told that he would only have power to speak as God should inspire him. An angel of the LORD stood in the way, with a drawn sword in his hand: Balaam's ass turned out of the way three times, and at length fell down. With hasty anger Balaam smote the ass;

“And the LORD opened the mouth of the ass, and she said what have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times.” “Am I not thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do thus unto thee?”

Then Balaam saw the angel standing in the way; and he bowed his head, and offered to return: but the angel commanded him to go on. “Go with the men: but only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak.”

Balak came out to meet Balaam, and received him with every mark of honour. On the next day, he took him to the top of a high mountain, consecrated to the worship of Baal,\* from whence he could see all the tents of the Israelites. Here seven altars were erected, and on each a bullock and a ram was offered in sacrifice. Balaam then retired to a high place, and having received command what he should speak, returned, and stood by his burnt sacrifice, with the princes of Moab. In full view of the tents of Israel, he took up his parable, and said,

“Balak, the king of Moab, hath brought me  
“from Aram, out of the mountains of the east,  
“saying, come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy  
“Israel. How shall I curse, whom God hath  
“not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the

\* A false god; here meaning the principal god of the Moabites. Baal is supposed to be the same as the Greek Apollo, and to represent the Sun. The Druids of Britain are believed to have been worshippers of Baal, or Belim.

“ LORD hath not defied ? For from the top of  
“ the rocks I see him, and from the hills I  
“ behold him : lo ! the people shall dwell alone,  
“ and shall not be reckoned among the nations.  
“ Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the  
“ number of the fourth part of Israel ? Let me  
“ die the death of the righteous, and let my  
“ last end be like his.”

“ And Balak said unto Balaam, what hast  
thou done unto me ? I took thee to curse my  
enemies, and behold thou hast blessed them  
altogether.”

“ And he answered and said, Must I not take  
heed to speak that which the LORD hath put into  
my mouth ?”

“ And Balak said unto him, come, I pray thee,  
with me into another place, from whence thou  
mayest see them ; thou shalt see but the utmost  
part of them, and shalt not see them all ; and  
curse me them from thence.”

Balak then conducted Balaam unto another  
part of the mountain, where he could see only a  
part of the Israelites ; here he raised seven altars  
as before, and here again Balaam pronounced a  
blessing upon the people of God.

“ Rise up, Balak, and hear, hearken unto me  
“ thou son of Zippor : God is not a man that he  
“ should lie ; neither the son of man, that he  
“ should repent : hath he said, and shall he not  
“ do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make  
“ it good ? Behold, I have received command-  
“ ment to bless : and he hath blessed : and I

"cannot reverse it." Balaam went on to bless the Israelites, and to prophecy that they should subdue all their enemies, and that no arts of men should be of any avail against them.

Balak made a third attempt to alter the blessing to a curse. He took Balaam to the summit of Mount Peor, where he again built seven altars, and offered Sacrifices; but here, as before, the prophet, instead of uttering a curse, repeated his blessing:

"How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! As the valleys are they spread forth, as the gardens by the river side, as the trees of lign-aloes, which the LORD hath planted, and as cedar trees beside the waters." Thus Balaam continued his blessing, and ended with these words, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee."

"And Balak's anger was kindled against Balaam, and he smote his hands together, and Balak said unto Balaam, I called thee to curse mine enemies, and, behold, thou hast altogether blessed them these three times. Therefore now flee thou to thy place: I thought to promote thee to great honour; but lo, the LORD hath kept thee back from honour.

Balaam, filled with the spirit of prophecy, broke forth again into a splendid prediction of the future fate of the Hebrew nation, contrasted with that of the idolatrous tribes around them. In it is this passage, considered by the Jews as

relating to the Messiah, "I shall see him, but not now : I shall behold him, but not nigh : there shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth."

Thus was Balaam disappointed of the reward he hoped to gain, by his weak and unrighteous compliance with Balak's request. He knew that God had blessed the Israelites ; notwithstanding which he endeavoured to curse them : he made the attempt three times, and when he failed, he devised another scheme for accomplishing his wicked purpose. He knew that the continuance of God's favour to the Israelites depended upon their faith and obedience, and that if they fell into idolatry they would be punished, He therefore advised Balak to invite them to a feast, held in honour of the false gods of the Moabites. Balak did so, and the Israelites went ; they joined in the idol worship, and the anger of the Lord was kindled against them. Many were put to death ; but the Moabites and the Midianites did not escape the just punishment of their perfidy. The Israelites were commanded to arm themselves and go out against them : five kings of Midian fell in battle : the country was spoiled ; and a rich booty of gold and silver, cattle and goods, was carried off by the conquerors. In this war, Balaam the prophet was slain. Thus miserably did he die, in consequence of seeking riches and honours, instead of seeking to know the will of God, and doing it.

The plains of Moab, with the territories of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, were now entirely subdued by the Israelites, and were to form a part of their future possessions. The district was fertile, and rich in pasturage for cattle: and the tribes of Reuben and Gad desired to have it for their portion; as they were shepherds, and had numerous flocks and herds. Moses gave them the land, on condition that they passed over Jordan with the other tribes, and aided them in conquering their portions. Moses commanded them to repair the cities, and establish in them their families, and the old men not capable of bearing arms, leaving only a sufficient guard for their protection, which was accordingly done. Besides these tribes, a part of the half tribe of Manasseh had also a portion of the country east of Jordan: their territory lay to the north from the sources of that river to the southern extremity of the sea of Tiberias. Next came the tribe of Gad, and farther south, the tribe of Reuben, whose country was on the borders of Moab, from which it was separated by the river Arnon. These are frequently called the Tribes Beyond Jordan.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

MOSES EXHORTS THE PEOPLE,  
AND APPOINTS JOSHUA TO BE HIS SUCCESSOR.  
MOSES DIES.

THE long expected time was now arrived, when the children of Israel were to enter the Land of Promise. But, before they crossed the river Jordan, which flowed between them and Canaan, their leader and lawgiver was to die. We can scarcely conceive a greater trial of faith and resignation; yet even here let us gratefully acknowledge the mercy of God, who tempered the trial to the age and character of his servant. Though Moses must have ardently desired to see the Land of Promise, and to establish in it the people he had led from bondage to its borders,—yet before the peaceful settlement of the Israelites the sins of the Canaanites were to be fearfully punished, as a warning to the nations of the world; and years of toil, warfare, and conquest were to precede their expulsion from the land. For this purpose, a warlike leader, not a peaceful lawgiver, was better suited; and however we may at first view mourn for the death of Moses on the eve of accomplishing his great enterprise, we cannot but own his chastisement was a blessing in disguise, and that his departure could not, at any future time, have been so happy for himself, or so justly fitted to the wants and circum-

stances of the Israelites. Whatever were the feelings of Moses, he submitted without a murmur to the divine will: he neither repined, nor uttered a complaint; but, fully acknowledging the justice of God, and relying with unshaken faith upon His mercy and compassion, he resigned himself to His holy will and prepared to deliver up his charge.

The Israelites assembled to hear the final exhortation of their great deliverer. In the presence of all the people, Moses recapitulated the history of the departure of their fathers out of Egypt,—their receiving the law from Mount Sinai,—their crossing the desert to Kadesh Barnea,—their repeated rebellions,—their wanderings and death in the wilderness,—and the safe arrival of the present generation on the borders of the land, promised to Abraham more than four hundred years before. He showed them how every instance of disobedience had been followed by severe and immediate punishment; and he solemnly declared, in the name of the LORD their God, that, if they disobeyed Him, as their fathers had done, punishment as severe, and as certain, would fall upon them. These punishments were expressly named: famine, the pestilence, and the sword of their enemies, should consume them, if they ceased to obey the statutes and ordinances given them at Mount Sinai, and turned away to idolatry, and the worship of the false gods of the surrounding nations. If, on the contrary, they obeyed the voice of the LORD their

God, and kept themselves free from the idolatrous practices of other nations, then they were to possess for ever the land of Canaan in peace, and enjoy the highest possible state of prosperity.

“And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul; That I will give you the rain of your land in due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn and thy wine, and thy oil. And I will send grass in thy field for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.”

“Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods and worship them; and then the LORD's wrath will be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly off the good land which the LORD giveth you.”

“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates;

that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swear unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.”\*

The Almighty had chosen out the Hebrew nation to keep alive in the world the knowledge of Himself, of his holiness, justice, mercy, and truth. The sin of idolatry, was, therefore, the greatest sin they could commit; and this sin was to be invariably visited with heavy and grievous punishment. Idolatry also implied many other sins; since, as we before stated, the idol-worship of the Canaanitish nations was extremely impure and cruel. This should be carefully kept in mind, when reading the history of the Hebrew people.

Moses promised the Israelites a certain conquest of the nations in Canaan, strong and powerful as they were: but he warned them not to think that the land of Canaan was given them on account of their own righteousness; for, on the contrary, they were “a stiff necked people,” and had been rebellious against the Lord. It was not for their righteousness, but for the wickedness of the Canaanites, that they were driven out before them.

The Seven Nations whom the Israelites were commanded to destroy utterly, were distinctly named; they were the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, Jebusites, and Gergasites: these, for the *greatness of their crimes*, were to be

\* Deut. xi, 13—21.

destroyed; but every other nation, even the Egyptians, which had enslaved them, were to be treated with humanity and kindness; a humanity, it should be observed, unknown to the laws of heathen nations.

In this last solemn exhortation, Moses recapitulated the whole of the Law; more fully detailing some parts, and enforcing others: he appointed to each of the tribes their portion, named the cities of the Levites, and the cities of refuge, and laid down the plan of their future conquests, and the final settlement of their government. When they should cross the Jordan, he commanded Joshua to erect a pillar, and engrave upon it all the laws which he had given them, in the presence of the twelve tribes. This pillar was to be reared on Mount Ebal,\* a barren mountain near the town of Shechem, in the country of Ephraim: opposite to Mount Ebal stood Mount Gerizim, famed for its fertility and verdure. On these two mountains, facing each other, with a narrow valley lying between them, the twelve tribes were to be assembled, six on one, and six on the other. The Law was to be read, and then the tribes on the barren mountain of Ebal were to pronounce a solemn curse upon the Israelitish nation, should they cease to obey its precepts, and fall off from the worship of **JEHOVAH**; when this was ended, and assented to

\* The Samaritans in latter times maintained that the pillar of the law was erected upon Mount Gerizim, and the sacrifice offered there.

by the whole assembled multitude, the tribes on Mount Gerizim repeated back the blessings which should attend the chosen people of the LORD, if they kept His commandments and abstained from idolatry.

The dreadful misfortunes which were to befall the nation in case of their disobedience, have been so remarkably fulfilled, that it will be necessary to enumerate a few, in order to attend to their accomplishment in the future history of this extraordinary people. Their land was to be unfruitful: neither the early nor the latter rain should fall:—their flocks and herds should not increase—famine and the pestilence should consume them—they should be defeated by their enemies, go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them—a nation of fierce countenance should come against them from afar, whose language they should not understand, who should besiege them in their gates, and eat up the fruit of the land until they were destroyed; in the straitness of the sieges they endured, it was foretold, with a horrible exactness of detail, that they should be reduced to eat their own children for food. Finally, after suffering these unprecedented misfortunes, the Israelites were to be scattered abroad, and to become “an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD should lead them.”

Thus were the two extremes of good and evil

\* There were two seasons of rain in Canaan, one in the autumn, the other in the spring.

offered to the Israelites; the only condition upon which their prosperity depended, being the sole undivided worship of the One True God, and obedience to the laws which He had given them.

“Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one  
 “LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy  
 “God with all thine heart, and with all thy  
 “soul, and with all thy might.” Whether the  
 Israelites chose obedience to God and happiness,  
 or disobedience and misery, will be seen in the  
 sequel of their history.

Moses, by God’s command, appointed Joshua to succeed him. He composed a song, in which the triumphs of the people are recorded in the splendid strains of eastern poetry, and finally pronounced a blessing upon the separate tribes. He then ascended to the summit of Mount Pisgah, from which God permitted him, and gave him power, to view the land of Canaan before his death. Here Moses died: the place of his burial is unknown.

“And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses.”

The character of Moses has justly attracted the admiration of mankind, in every age and country where it has been known. It is impossible to read his life without being forcibly impressed, not only with the greatness of his genius, but with the height of moral excellence to which he at-

tained, and in which he so far surpassed his age. Exalted faith, pure and perfect disinterestedness, and enduring meekness, are his distinguishing qualities: while as a leader, and divinely-instructed lawgiver, he stands unrivalled in the annals of antiquity. Appointed by the Almighty to be the Deliverer of his enslaved countrymen, their ruler, and the founder of their civil institutions,—he yet presents a beautiful example of real and deep-felt humility, with even Christian lowliness of mind. “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which are upon the face of the earth,” is the praise bestowed upon him by the sacred historian; and a careful examination of his life proves it to have been eminently just. Yet was this meekness perfectly consistent with energy of character, and unshaken firmness in a good and holy purpose. He quitted the splendour and luxury of a court, in order to visit his despised and oppressed brethren; and, when assured of his divine mission, he fearlessly braved the resentment of a powerful king and an enraged people, that he might fulfil the commands of God, and deliver his nation from slavery. When these same people, released from bondage, repay his devotion to them with ungrateful murmurings and imprecations, he resents not their childish fickleness and cruel ingratitude, but pleads with the Almighty for their pardon, and still prefers their glory and happiness to his own.

The laws which the Israelites received from



God, and which Moses was appointed to establish, had a powerful influence on the character of succeeding times. It is well known that the celebrated lawgivers and philosophers of Greece travelled into Syria and Egypt to acquire the wisdom of their priests and sages, and to study their institutions, in order to recommend to the Grecian cities whatever was most worthy of their imitation. In these countries many Jews were settled, from whom a knowledge of the Hebrew institutions would easily be obtained; and the learned, who have studied the works of the ancients, assure us that this knowledge is clearly discernible throughout their writings; and that the maxims and laws which are considered as the most brilliant proofs of their genius, and, as being extraordinary in heathen philosophers, are evidently copied from the Mosaic dispensation. But if the character of Moses was calculated to make an impression upon heathens, who regarded him only as a distinguished lawgiver, what should be its effect upon us, who know that he was the chosen servant of the Almighty, and blessed, in a pre-eminent degree, with the divine favour and approbation! Let us not then read his history in vain; but, let us seek, like him, to obtain the blessing of our Heavenly Father by a steadfast obedience to His commands, and by cultivating "a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE HISTORY OF JOB.

BEFORE resuming our account of the Israelites at the close of their long sojourn in the desert, we propose to give a slight sketch of the history of Job, such as it is related in the Bible, and without entering into the various opinions of the learned regarding its author, or the exact date of its composition.\*

The Patriarch Job was a man eminent for his piety and integrity, who lived in the land of Uz, the same as Edom, or Idumea. The time when he lived is unknown; but one opinion generally adopted is, that it was shortly previous to, or contemporary with Moses: some commentators, however, are of opinion that he lived in the time of Abraham; and others, as late as Solomon. Following the former of these dates, Job was a

\* On this much controverted subject we refer our readers to Bishop Lowth's *Lectures on Hebrew Poetry, translated from the Latin by G. Gregory, F.A.S., with notes*, by which we have been principally guided in drawing up the above abstract. The question is too intricate to admit of the arguments being adverted to here: it is only important to observe that it has been variously contended that Moses was the author of the Book of Job, while some writers assign to it as late a date as the time of Solomon. Against both these opinions able commentators have maintained, that it bears marks of being of an earlier date than the Exodus of the Israelites; and that the style is different from that of the Hebrew lawgiver.

prince of Edom, a descendant of the great patriarch Abraham, through Esau; a man of wealth and consideration, blessed with a numerous family of sons and daughters, all prosperous and held in esteem, and himself regarded with feelings of veneration, gratitude, and respect by the surrounding princes and tribes. In the midst of this prosperity and happiness, it pleased God to permit his faith and patience to be tried by sudden and overwhelming calamities. First, an inroad of the Sabeans and Chaldeans carried off his oxen and his sheep, and slew his servants; "And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking in their elder brother's house. And there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them; And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee. While he was yet speaking there came also another and said, the fire of God is fallen from heaven and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee." Next followed a heavier trial. "While he was yet speaking, there came also another and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their elder brother's house; And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men and they are dead: And I only am escaped alone to tell

thee." These dreadful tidings did not alter the pious resignation of Job: he fell down and worshipped, and exclaimed with devout humility, "the LORD gave and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

The next affliction was yet more grievous, and harder to bear with uncomplaining patience. The Patriarch was suddenly afflicted with a painful and loathsome disorder; a species of leprosy, which covered his body with sores, from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. To add bitterness to his sufferings, his wife, who should have been his comforter and support, cast reproaches on him for trusting in the goodness of Jehovah, and his own faithfulness. "Dost thou," said she upbraidingly, "still retain thine integrity? curse God and die!" But the Patriarch preserved his resignation and trust, and replied, "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

This forms the first part of the history, and is written in the original Hebrew in prose, as are also the introductions to the speeches and replies which follow; the speeches themselves being in the loftiest and sublimest strain of poetry, unequalled in any poem extant, whether sacred or profane. Job's misfortunes called for the sympathy of his friends; and accordingly, three neighbouring princes who called themselves such, came to offer him their consolation. These were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite,

and Zophan the Naamathite, "for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him, and to comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not," (he was so changed by the loathsome disease) "they lifted up their voice and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him, for they saw that his grief was very great."

There is something singularly touching, and peculiarly characteristic of Eastern habits, in the conduct of Job's friends. They saw that his affliction was too great to admit of consolation from words, though they should be words of kindness; and that the best comfort they could bestow in the first moments of his anguish, was that of sorrowing with him in silence. In this they showed a refined delicacy of feeling, often observable in the manners of Oriental nations: but this sympathy and kindness was soon changed for harshness and rebuke; and now properly begins the poem. Job, mourning over his afflictions, pours forth a bitter lamentation, and earnestly desires he had never been born. This is answered by his friends, who assert that no man ever perished who was innocent, and that he must have been guilty in the sight of God, or He would not have thus afflicted him. Job refuses to allow that he has deserved his sufferings; he justifies his former life, and accuses his

friends of triumphing over him, only because he is now reduced to a state of degradation, while in the days of his prosperity "men gave ear, and waited and kept silence at his counsel, and after his words they spake not again." Three times the friends renew their argument, and three times does Job reply; sometimes bewailing his sufferings as unexampled in severity, sometimes relating the virtuous actions of his past life, and again reproaching his friends with their desertion and unkindness; but always refusing to acknowledge that he suffers for any peculiar sinfulness in himself; the language throughout being in the highest degree poetical, and the descriptions of the might and majesty of Jehovah most sublime. At this period of the dispute a fourth person joins in the argument; this is Elihu, who, being younger than the other friends of the aged Patriarch, had hitherto listened in respectful attention to their discourses. He is angry with both parties; with the three friends, because they accused Job unjustly without answering his statement, and with Job, because "he was righteous in his own eyes," "and justified himself rather than God." The contest appears to have been carried on in the open air, in the presence probably of many chance spectators, such as is represented to be still the practice with Orientals, who are peculiarly fond of this sort of disputation and trial of mental acuteness. Elihu, after excusing his entering into the debate, (he being so much younger than Job and his friends) proceeds in

the loftiest strain of poetry to show forth the immeasurable power and holiness of the Almighty, and the infinite distance between Him and His creatures, while yet His eyes are upon the ways of Man, and He seeth all his doings. "There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. For He will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God." To the reasoning of Elihu, Job makes no reply: he had before urged his defence in language which enlightened piety cannot justify; but "that individual must be less than human who makes no allowance for this child of sorrow." His friends had mingled unjust accusations with their vindications of God's Providence, and, as is too often the case, asperity and bitterness on both sides was the consequence. The address of Elihu equally reprehended Job and his accusers, for want of justice and humility; he called upon Job to recognize the hand of the Almighty Sovereign of the universe in his afflictions, and to remember that, though righteous in his own sight, "God is greater than Man," and knowing all things, gives no account to Man of His all-wise dealings with him, and therefore it is fitting that men should trust in Him, and not rely on their own frail understanding, and condemn presumptuously the ways of His providence: He sums up his address with this truly devotional and sublime truth: "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out; He is excellent in power,

and in judgment, and in plenty of justice; He will not afflict. Men do therefore fear Him; He respecteth not any that are wise (that is proud) of heart."

This address of Elihu subdues Job: he makes no reply, and then comes the grandest and most magnificent portion of this sublime poem: "Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me, Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest; or who hath stretched the line upon it; whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened; or who laid the corner stone thereof; when the morning stars sung together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

It falls not within the limits of this work to make farther extracts out of this magnificent poem: detached portions can give but a faint idea of the sublime morality and the awful grandeur of those descriptions of Divine Power with which it abounds; and we refer our readers to the Bible itself, for a fuller understanding of this unrivalled production. We must content ourselves with briefly noticing the close of the history.

Job humbly acknowledges his frailty and weakness, and 'repents in dust and ashes.' The



friends of the Patriarch are condemned, because they had not spoken of God the things that were right ; and they are commanded to expiate their sin, by offering a sacrifice of seven bullocks and seven rams ; while Job is restored to health, and blessed with increased riches and prosperity : “ the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning : for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters.” “ After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons’ sons, even four generations. So Job died, being old, and full of days.”

This is a brief outline of this earliest complete poem extant. With regard to its nature and character, it is generally regarded as a true history, adorned and amplified by the sacred Poet. The moral to be drawn from the Book of Job is two-fold ; first, from the simple circumstances of the history, which represents the Patriarch suddenly and grievously afflicted, bearing his losses with patient submission, and being finally rewarded by a full restoration to his former state of prosperity : from this we learn the duty of patience under suffering, and that suffering is not of necessity the token of guilt. The second lesson taught is yet more important, and is found in the conduct and speeches of the friends, and Job’s vindication of himself. Malignity, and an artful application of known truths

respecting the power and goodness of Jehovah, to the purpose of concealing their own bitterness, under the veil of a pretended zeal for the honor of God; this is the real character of their discourse, and under this trial the Patriarch in part yields: the unjust asperity of his accusers brings forth asperity and undue self-justification in him. Here is his fault; and for this he is reproved, first by Elihu, and next, by the awful voice of Jehovah speaking in the whirlwind. That Man should not be self-righteous, but should distrust himself, and confide with humble trust in the dispensations of God, under every trial, and in every affliction, and never, even in thought, doubt the goodness, justice, and wisdom of his Almighty Creator,—this is the second, and most important truth impressed by the sacred writer of the Book of Job.

END OF THE SECOND PERIOD.



## **THE THIRD PERIOD.**

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**FROM THE DEATH OF MOSES TO THE BUILDING  
OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.**

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**Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1st Samuel,  
2nd Samuel.**

**1st Kings to the Ninth Chapter. 1st Chronicles.  
2nd Chronicles to the Eighth Chapter.**



## THE THIRD PERIOD.

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### CHAPTER I.

**JOSHUA SUCCEEDS MOSES IN THE COMMAND OF THE  
ISRAELITES. SPIES SENT TO VIEW JERICO.**

WE are now entering upon a new and distinct period in the history of the Israelites ; a period of war and conquest, full of rapidly succeeding events, and of frequent miraculous interposition. The Israelites were arrived at the borders of the land, which was to be theirs by the express command of God ; the land of Canaan, to which Abraham had come in faith four hundred years before, and which it was then promised should be the country of his descendants. At the period, when the destruction of the Canaanites was foretold, they were already notorious for their vices ; and an awful warning of the punishment which would be the consequence of such depravity, was given them, in the sudden and terrible fate of Sodom, and the other five cities : but the warning was disregarded, and the people were soon wholly given up to idolatry, and its attendant wickedness. In consequence of this their pre-eminence in vice, a fearful example was made of them, to prove to the surrounding nations that there was a God

in Heaven, "who judges of the actions of men," and who will not suffer the wicked to prosper. It was ordained that the Canaanites should be utterly destroyed as a people, and their country given to the Israelites. These latter were chosen as instruments to inflict the Divine chastisement upon the Canaanites: but their keeping possession of the land, was to depend upon their abstaining themselves from the crimes which had caused the expulsion of the Canaanites; to which conquest the history now proceeds.

Before his death, Moses had appointed Joshua the son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, to be his successor: Joshua had, during forty years, been the leader of the people in their military expeditions; having commanded them when they defeated the Amalekites near Mount Sinai, and when they conquered the treacherous Midianites, at the close of their journey through the wilderness. The people were thus accustomed to obey him; and, having been from early life the chosen attendant of Moses, he was peculiarly well fitted to succeed him in the arduous task of government: farther to encourage him in his high undertaking, the Lord spoke to him, and Himself commanded him to be strong and of good courage, and promised that he would be with him as He had been with Moses. "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua thus divinely commissioned, assumed the command of the Israelites, and was henceforth

their general in war and their leader and ruler in civil affairs.

After thirty days had been spent in solemn mourning for the death of Moses, Joshua ordered the people to prepare for leaving their encampment at Shittim, and passed over the river Jordan. He sent for the heads of the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh, whose portions had already been allotted to them out of the lands of the conquered Midianites and Amorites; and, reminding them of the promise which they had made to Moses that they would cross over Jordan with the other tribes, and assist them in the conquest of Canaan,—he desired them now to prepare to follow him. To this they cheerfully replied, “All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.”

Previously to breaking up his encampment, Joshua dispatched two spies to the town of Jericho, to view the land, and bring a report of the strength of the city. And the men went, and lodged in the house of a woman named Rahab. “And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, behold there came men in hither to-night



of the children of Israel, to search out the country. And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house, for they be come to search out all the country. And the woman took the two men and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly, for ye shall overtake them. But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof. And the men pursued after them the way to Jordan, unto the fords: and as soon as they which pursued after them were gone out, they shut the gate."

"And before the spies were laid down, Rahab came up unto them upon the roof: And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, which were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard these things our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you; for the LORD your God, he is

God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token; And that ye will save alive my father and my mother, and my brother, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death."

To this request of Rahab the spies readily assented; and they promised, in the name of their leader, that when the city was taken, she and all who were in her house should be saved alive. Rahab's house was built upon the walls of the city, and a window looked out upon the open country without the gates, which were shut and guarded, to prevent the escape of the spies. To this window she now took them, and let them down by a cord to the foot of the wall; whence she desired them to flee into the mountains, and wait there concealed three days, until the men of Jericho who were sent in their pursuit should be returned; after which they might re-cross the Jordan, and proceed in safety to their camp. Before leaving Rahab, the spies fixed upon a token by which to distinguish her house, when their army should come to besiege Jericho. They desired her to bind in her window the line of scarlet cord by which she had let them down; and they again solemnly promised that if she would bring into her house her parents and relations, all these should be saved, in return for the protection she had afforded them. They then fled

in haste to the mountains, where they remained three days, until all danger of pursuit was over, and then they returned to Joshua.\*

We should be careful to observe that the conduct of Rahab in deceiving the king's messengers in order to save the spies, is not put down for our imitation, but simply recorded as a fact : nor is she rewarded for the manner in which she rescued the spies, but for believing in the God of the Israelites, and preserving the lives of his people. She, like the rest of her nation, had heard of the miraculous manner in which the Israelites had been brought out of Egypt, and led through the imminent dangers which beset their journey across the wilderness ; fame spoke loudly of the destruction which had overwhelmed the Midianites, and Amorites ; and, while the king of Jericho hardened his heart, like Pharaoh, and resolved to resist a power evidently divine, Rahab took the wiser and more virtuous course of submission, and obedience. She considered the Israelites as the chosen people of God ; and as such, and evidently only because they were such, she preserved the lives of the spies, and by so doing, saved her own : for, "she perished not, with them that believed not, when she had

\* The houses in the east are usually built with flat roofs, surrounded with a parapet, whither the family resort in the cool of the evening, to enjoy the delightful freshness of the air : sometimes an awning is put up, and the roof thus becomes the pleasantest apartment of the house. The parapets between the houses are usually so high as to secure the most complete privacy.

received the spies with peace." *Heb.xi. 31.* Meanwhile, the spies returned in safety to Joshua, to whom they related all that had befallen them, concluding with these words, "Truly the LORD hath delivered into our hands all the land; for even all the inhabitants of the land do faint because of us."

Immediately on the return of the spies, Joshua broke up his camp at Shittim and marched to the Jordan, where he rested three days. Here he commanded the Israelites to sanctify themselves, in holy preparation of the great miracle about to be wrought; which was to magnify Joshua in the sight of the people, and prove that the Almighty was with him, as He had been with Moses.

"And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will, without fail, drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perrizzites, and the Gergashites, and the Amorites and the Jebusites. Behold, the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now, therefore, take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the Ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut

off from the waters that come down from above ; and they shall stand upon an heap." " And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the Ark of the Covenant before the people, as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare it were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overflowed all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan ; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off ; and the people passed over right against Jericho.\* And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan ; and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan."

When the people had passed, the Levites bearing the sacred ark, came up out of the bed of the river, and the waters returned to their usual course: the twelve men whom Joshua had commanded to be selected from each tribe, took twelve stones out of the river, from the spot where the Levites stood, and carried them to Gilgal, where the Israelites encamped that night:

\* The portion of the bed of the river laid dry is supposed to be about seven miles ; the ark borne by the Levites being close against the wall of water, was thus interposed between it and the people which passed below.

there they were erected into a pillar, to be for a sign and memorial to their children's children, of the mighty miracle which had signalized their entrance into the land promised to their fathers; "that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD that it is mighty; and that the Israelites might fear the LORD their God for ever."

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE ISRAELITES KEEP THE PASSOVER OF GILGAL.

#### MANNA CEASES. THE TAKING OF JERICHO.

THE night after the Israelites passed over Jordan, they encamped at Gilgal, a small town situated between the Jordan and Jericho, the exact site of which is unknown. Here the miraculous supply of manna, which had afforded them food in the desert plains of the wilderness, ceased; for in the Land of Promise whither they were come, plenty reigned, and they eat of "the old corn of the land," and of "parched corn" the self same day. It was at the time of the barley harvest, after the corn-harvest, and the parched corn was probably ears of new corn roasted or baked, which is at this day a common and favourite dish with the inhabitants of the East. Before proceeding to the conquest of the

country, the Israelites kept the Feast of the Passover, in solemn and joyful celebration of their deliverance from Egypt; and then marched to Jericho. This was a city of considerable note, situated in a fruitful plain watered by the Jordan: it was remarkable for its fertility, and for the growth of great quantities of palm trees, as well as for the tree called Opobalsamum, from which the famous balsam was procured. The plain of Jericho was the most highly cultivated district in Judea, and the town was strongly fortified. The Israelites, preceded by their leader Joshua, and the Levites bearing the Sacred Ark, encamped before its walls, surrounding its gates, and stopping all entrance to or egress from the city. But, this precaution being taken, no further military operations followed; no engines of war were brought forward to batter down the walls, no forces appeared in arms to attack their defenders,—all was repose.

“Now Jericho was straitly shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in. And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor. And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the Ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make

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a long blast with the ram's horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him."

In obedience to this divine direction the priests took the ark, and preceded by seven priests blowing trumpets of rams' horns, and by bands of armed men, and, followed by the rest of the people, they marched in silence round the city once, and returned to their tents. In the same manner, they encompassed the city for six successive days: on the seventh, instead of once, they marched round the city seven times: "and it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout, for the LORD hath given you the city." "So the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets; and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight before him, and they took the city."

This first conquest, thus miraculously achieved, was in an especial manner devoted to the LORD, as a kind of first fruits; probably to impress upon their minds the difference between this and any common victory. No part of the spoil was allowed to be appropriated by the conquerors: the vessels of gold, silver, and brass, which could not be consumed, were ordered to be set apart for the service



of the Tabernacle: the city was burnt with fire, and every living thing was utterly destroyed. Before executing this fearful sentence upon a wicked people, Rahab, and all within her house were, according to the promise of the spies, sent for by Joshua, and lodged in safety without the city; and she and her family lived ever after in peace and prosperity in the land of Judah. To make the punishment of the inhabitants of Jericho more evidently Divine, and show in a signal manner that the displeasure of the Almighty was the real cause of its overthrow, and not the arms of the Israelites, a solemn curse was pronounced over it, extending to all who should attempt to take any part of the spoil, or who should at any future period rebuild it.\*

Joshua, encouraged by the signal conquest he had made of so important a town as Jericho, now took measures for the subjugation of the neighbouring country. For this purpose, he dispatched men to Ai, a town situated to the west of Bethel, to examine its strength, and ascertain the force it would be necessary to send against it. They returned, saying that the people were few, and a small number only of the Israelites would be sufficient to reduce it. On this, without applying for Divine direction, Joshua sent a small body of

\* Jericho was rebuilt 537 years afterwards by Hiel of Bethel: his eldest son died at the laying the foundation, and his youngest son when the gates were hung, and the city finished. Before this time there was a City of Palm Trees, supposed to be the same as Jericho; but this did not stand upon the site of the destroyed town, but near to it.

forces to attack Ai, remaining with the rest encamped near Jericho. To the inexpressible terror and dismay of the chosen people and their leader, these troops were repulsed by the men of Ai, and driven back with loss and disgrace. The greatest distress filled the camp: the Divine assistance which had hitherto been freely granted them, appeared to be withdrawn, and the hearts of the people melted within them with fear. "Then Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the Ark of the Lord, until the eventide, he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads." The reason of their being forsaken was declared: the command respecting the spoil of Jericho had been secretly disobeyed, and was thus openly punished; a useful and awful lesson to the people of God, teaching them that no secret fault was secret to the invisible Being whom they served, but was known by Him to whom the darkness and the light are both alike, and by whom the very thoughts of our hearts are heard:

"Guard well thy thoughts,  
Thy thoughts are heard in heaven."

YOUNG.

Joshua was commanded to assemble the people in their tribes in the morning, and cause them to draw lots, which (being miraculously directed) should make known the tribe that contained the guilty person. In this manner the tribe of Judah was taken: the families of the tribe then

came up, when the family of the Zarhites was taken: the family of the Zarhites came up, and Zabdi the son of Zera, of the tribe of Judah, was taken; and when the household of Zabdi was called, Achan his son was taken. Then Achan confessed his sin, and said, "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels' weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord." Then Achan and all that he had was brought unto the valley of Achor, and all Israel stoned him with stones; a heap of stones was raised over the spot, and long continued to mark the place where this first act of secret but wilful disobedience to a Divine command, met with its public punishment.

## CHAPTER III.

AI TAKEN BY STRATAGEM. DECEIT OF THE GIBEON-  
ITES. DEATH OF THE FIVE KINGS. FINAL  
CONQUEST AND DIVISION OF THE LAND. EXHOR-  
TATION AND DEATH OF JOSHUA.

THE sin of disobedience having been atoned for by the signal punishment of the offender, the Israelites were commanded to resume their work of conquest, and success was once more promised to their arms. A feeling of distrust, however, appears to have remained, in consequence of their late repulse; and Joshua employed a stratagem, common in war in after-times, to accomplish the destruction of Ai. He chose out a body of "mighty men," and, sending them away by night, commanded them to lie in ambush near the city, and there wait concealed until the morning; Joshua and the remaining forces passing the night in the camp. The men did as they were commanded, and lay in ambush on the west side of the town, between Ai and Bethel. Then Joshua rose up early in the morning and numbered the people, and went up, he and the elders of Israel before the people of Ai. And all the people, even the people of war that were with him, went up and drew nigh, and came before the city, and pitched on the north side of Ai:

Now there was a valley between them and Ai. And he took about five thousand men, and set them to lie in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. And when they had set the people, even all the host that was on the north of the city, and their liers in wait on the west of the city, Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley. And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hasted and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city. And Joshua and all Israel made as though they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people that were in Ai were called together, to pursue after them: And they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city. And there was not a man left in Ai\* that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel. And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai, for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city."

"And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand; and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire.

\* "Or Bethel," is added in the received version; the words are not in the Septuagint.

And when the men of Ai looked behind them, they saw, and behold, the smoke of the city ascended up to heaven, and they had no power to flee this way or that way : and the people that fled to the wilderness turned back upon the pursuers. And when Joshua and all Israel saw that the ambush had taken the city, and that the smoke of the city ascended, then they turned again, and slew the men of Ai. And the other issued out of the city against them ; so they were in the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side ; and they smote them, so that they let none of them remain or escape. And the king of Ai they took alive, and brought him to Joshua."

Thus was the success of the Israelites again complete. The City of Ai was destroyed, the inhabitants put to the sword, and their king hung upon a tree until evening, when, according to the humane direction of the Mosaic law, and contrary to the savage customs of that age, the body was taken down and interred: a mound of stones raised over it commemorated the event, and marked the place where the Israelites had triumphed: the spoil and cattle were given to them for a prey, and not forbidden to be taken, as at Jericho.

Before proceeding further in his victorious career, and while the terror excited by his late success left him in undisturbed possession of the open country, Joshua prepared to obey the command of Moses, and recite the Law in a solemn

assembly of the people. Bringing the Israelites to the neighbourhood of Shechem, in the country afterwards called Samaria, the tribes were placed on the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, that arose on each side of a narrow valley, in which stood the priests and Levites bearing the sacred ark. Mount Ebal was barren and unfruitful. Mount Gerizim was fertile, and covered with a beautiful verdure. Here Joshua read the laws, in hearing of all the people; then the six tribes stationed on the barren mountain recapitulated the punishments which would fall upon the disobedient people, if they forsook the commandments of their inspired lawgiver, and fell into the idolatry of the Canaanitish nations: famine, pestilence, the sword of conquering enemies, and finally the loss of that land which they had now received as an inheritance. These awful denunciations ended, the tribes on the lovely mountain of Gerizim, repeated back the blessings which would for ever attend the chosen people of the LORD, if they resisted all temptations to idolatry, remained true to their sublime faith, and trusted and obeyed their holy and beneficent Creator. "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them."

"Then Joshua built an altar unto the LORD God of Israel, in Mount Ebal. As Moses the servant of the LORD commanded the children of

Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones over which no man hath lift up any iron: and they offered thereon burnt-offerings unto the Lord, and sacrificed peace-offerings.\* And he wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he wrote in the presence of the children of Israel."

This solemn renewal of the covenant of the people, to remain faithful to the worship of the True and Only God, being ended, Joshua prepared to complete his conquest of the country. The kings, or small independent chiefs of the district round, namely, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, alarmed at the fate of Ai, combined together, and resolved to try their united strength against the Israelites. But the Gibeonites, a people living in the near neighbourhood of Ai, terrified at the destruction of that city, and apparently aware that Joshua would not make

\* On the pillar, which was to remain as a memorial of this solemn covenant, the chief laws were inscribed in the manner of many ancient nations, who adopted this method of preserving the memory of public events, when written records were almost unknown, and were unintelligible to the mass of the people. As we have before mentioned, the place where this pillar was erected was in after-times disputed; the Samaritans maintaining that it was upon Mount Gerizim where their temple was built, and which they in consequence considered to be the true temple, in opposition to the temple of Jerusalem: hence the question asked by the woman of Samaria of Our Lord, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye (*Jews*) say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."—*John* iv. 10.



a league of peace with any of the Canaanitish nations, secretly seceded from the league of the five kings, and made use of the following artifice to secure their own peace with the conquerors.

“And when the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done unto Jericho and to Ai, They did work wilily, and went and made as if they had been ambassadors, and took old sacks upon their asses, and wine bottles old and rent, and bound up: And old shoes and clouted upon their feet, and old garments upon them: and all the bread of their provision was dry and mouldy. And they went to Joshua unto the camp of Gilgal, and said unto him and to the men of Israel, We be come from a far country: now, therefore, make ye a league with us. And the men of Israel said unto the Hivites: Peradventure ye dwell among us; and how shall we make a league with you? And they said to Joshua, We are thy servants. And Joshua said unto them, Who are ye? and from whence come ye?”

“And they said unto him, From a very far country thy servants are come, because of the name of the LORD thy God; for we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt, And all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond Jordan, to Sihon king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, which was at Ashtaroth. Wherefore our elders and all the inhabitants of our country spake to us, saying, Take victuals with you for the journey, and go to meet them, and say unto them, We are your

servants : therefore, now make ye a league with us. This our bread we took hot for our provision out of our houses on the day we came forth to go unto you : and now, behold, it is dry, and it is mouldy : And these bottles of wine which we filled, were new ; and behold, they be rent :\* and these our garments, and our shoes, are become old by reason of the very long journey."

"And the men (*of Israel*)† took of their victuals, and asked not counsel of the LORD."

"And Joshna made peace with them, and made a league with them, to let them live : and the princes of the congregation sware unto them."

"And it came to pass at the end of three days after they had made a league with them, that they heard that they were their neighbours, and that they dwelt among them."

On discovering the imposition which had been practised, the people murmured against the princes, or elders, who had engaged them by a solemn covenant to make peace with an idola-

\* The bottles used by ancient nations were made of the skins of animals properly dressed, and prepared for the purpose : the inside of the animal being taken out, and, the holes of the skin where the legs were, being fastened up, the neck served for the neck of the vessel, and in this form are bottles represented on medals, and antiques. When these bottles were empty, they could be folded up, and carried easily, but they were liable to be rent, and to burst by use, and frequent changes from moisture to dryness.

† Meaning the Elders, or Princes of Israel, who assisted Joshua in the government.

trous nation, contrary to the divine command, and had acted hastily on their own authority, without asking counsel, as they were in all cases permitted to do, of the Divine Being. There was some difficulty in staying the tumult, and in preventing the people from slaying the deceitful Gibeonites; but the Elders said, "We have sworn to them by the LORD God of Israel: now therefore we may not touch them." To observe their oath, and at the same time punish the Gibeonites for their artifice, it was resolved that they should be allowed to live unmolested, but should be obliged to hew the wood and draw the water used in the service of the Tabernacle. This, especially during the time of the Festivals, was a laborious service; and the people being by this agreement relieved from it, were more disposed to acquiesce in the merciful decision of their elders.

"And Joshua called for the Gibeonites, and he spake unto them, saying, Wherefore have ye beguiled us, saying, We are very far from you; when ye dwell among us: Now, therefore, ye are cursed,\* and there shall none of you be freed from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God."

And they answered Joshua, and said, "Because it was certainly told thy servants, how that the LORD thy God commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you, therefore

\* Or, Have acted very sinfully—"are condemned."

we were sore afraid of our lives because of you, and have done this thing. And now, behold, we are in thine hand; as it seemeth good and right unto thee to do unto us, do."

"And so he did unto them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, and they slew them not. And Joshua made them that day hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the LORD even unto this day, in the place which he should choose."

The league which the Gibeonites had made with Joshua drew upon them the indignation of their former friends and allies, the five kings of the Amoritish nation. These, headed by Adonizedek king of Jerusalem, prepared to revenge the desertion of Gibeon, and, gathering themselves together, went up and made war upon them. The terrified Gibeonites sent to Joshua for aid; and he instantly assembled together his people of war, and mighty men of valor, and, ascending from Gilgal, marched all night and came suddenly upon the Amorites near Beth-horon. A battle ensued, which lasted all day: during the engagement, a violent storm of hail discomfited the idolaters, and slew great numbers of them: night coming on before the battle was finished, daylight was miraculously prolonged, to give the Israelites time to complete their victory. The Sun and Moon, the chief divinities of the Canaanites, and which had doubtless been invoked to aid them on that day, were made the instruments

of their defeat.\* “Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the Book of Joshua? So the Sun stood still in the midst of the Heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that, before it, or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel.”†

\* Great difference of opinion exists with regard to this miracle. Some persons have objected, that as the earth moves, and not the sun, Joshua, had he been divinely inspired, would have commanded the earth to stand still, and not the sun. To this it is sufficient to reply, that to Joshua was given power to defeat the enemies of the Israelites, but not, as far as we know, the knowledge of an astronomer: nor, even had he used such learned language, would it have been understood by the army; and consequently the effect of the stupendous miracle would have been completely lost.

† Whether the laws of Nature were suspended on this occasion, or, as many commentators suppose, the effect of a lengthened day was produced by the refraction of the sun's rays, causing a twilight equal in brilliancy to the light of the sun, and, therefore, being in point of utility and appearance, *day*,—or, in fact, by any other means consonant to known natural laws, though *miraculous* in occurring at the command of the inspired leader,—however the fact may be regarded, it is certain that a tradition exists in the East, in India, and in China, of a day of unusual length having once occurred: the tradition is variously ornamented, to suit the theology of different nations; but its existence is a singular corroboration of the Scripture account. By some, the whole is considered poetical, and not historical; as the account

The five kings terrified at the signal defeat of their troops, fled and took refuge in a cave at Makkedah. Here they were secured by rolling large stones to the mouth of the cave, and men were set to guard it until the pursuit of the flying army was over. Then Joshua commanded them to be brought out, and slain. Their bodies

of the sun's being arrested in his course, concludes with these words, "as it is written in the Book of Jasher"—the Book of Jasher is supposed to have been a figurative and poetical account of the astonishing records of the Israelitish nation; but the words "and the Sun stood still, &c.," and "there was no day like that before it or after it," seems to forbid this conclusion. It was the age of miracles; and this must not be looked upon as a detached event.

Since writing the above, the Author has been favoured by Dr. Raphall with the Hebrew Review, in which is given, (Vol. i. page 149) the following explanation of this disputed passage:—It is part of an extract from a Lecture delivered by the late Arthur Lumley Davids, on the Philosophy of the Jews. "The Hebrew language, in accordance with strict philosophical principles, has three names for *sun*. The English has also three, but they are compound terms, thus—solar orb, solar flame, solar light; yet we unphilosophically use the word *sun* in all these senses: we say the sun is round, the sun is powerful, the sun is obscured, though we mean the solar *orb* is round, the solar *flame* is powerful, the solar *light* is obscured. This philosophical accuracy exists, however, primarily in Hebrew. The solar orb is expressed by no compound term: the word *cheres* expresses this signification; *chamah* the solar flame; so likewise *shemesh*, the word used by Joshua, the solar *light*." From this it would appear that Joshua did not command the *sun* to stand still, but simply the *sun's light* to remain. The extract also contains the following reference to the Eastern tradition of this event. "The Chinese have preserved a confused account in their annals, of the 'sun not going down for the space of ten days.' This happened in the time of Yan (their seventh monarch from Fohi) who was contemporary with Joshua." "Herodotus says he was told by

were hung upon five trees in sight of all the people, and left until the evening, when they were taken down, and cast into the cave, where they had been hid.

Thus was completed the destruction of the kings who had combined against Israel, and the subjugation of the whole of the Southern district of Canaan as far as Gaza, followed; with the exception of some few fortified places, which remained in the hands of the idolaters. Having accomplished this portion of his great enterprize, Joshua returned to the camp at Gilgal, where the women and children, together with the men not employed in the war, remained.

After this victory over the people of the South of Canaan, the kings to the north took the alarm, and entered into a league against the Israelites. They appear to have remained inactive during the war which desolated the territories of the Amorites; but now, becoming sensible of their own danger, they assembled the whole of their forces, and met Joshua near the Waters of Merom, in the immediate neighbourhood of the lofty mountains of Lebanon. The chief strength of their army lay in their armed chariots of war, and in their horses; a species of warfare which

the Egyptian priests, that from the reign of their first king to that of Sethon, the sun had risen four times in an unusual manner; that he had twice risen where he now sets; and had twice set where he now rises. This, though corrupted by its passage through the hands of the Egyptian Priests, and the wonder-telling Herodotus, may still be traced to a traditionary relation of the miracle of Joshua."

implies a considerable progress in the military art, as then practised, and in which they were kept in constant exercise by the quarrels that arose between these neighbouring states. Yet against this formidable array Joshua marched undismayed, in the full confidence of victory. His hopes were not disappointed: the combined kings of the north were defeated in a pitched battle, and all their boasted chariots of war were taken and destroyed. After this, the open country submitted to the all-conquering Israelites. Such of the enemy as escaped took refuge in the fenced cities with which the country abounded; and hither they were pursued; and the greater part fell one by one into the hands of the victors.

We now cease to follow the history of the war in detail: it lasted seven years, during which time, nearly all the country given to the Israelites for a possession was subdued, and but few of the cities remained uncaptured. Yet the *complete* conquest which they had been so expressly commanded to effect was unfinished; and a number of the idolatrous people were left, to disturb the future tranquility of the Israelites. They were however weary of the war; and the three tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, whose portions were already assigned them beyond the Jordan, earnestly desired to return, and enjoy their inheritance. To these solicitations Joshua yielded; whether he was forced to do so, against his own judgment, or whether he,



too, allowed himself to be swayed by the hope of present ease, instead of regarding alone the Divine command he had received, can scarcely be known at this distance of time, and with the brief account which is left us of the transaction : in either case, the act of disobedience was followed by future suffering, the never failing attendant upon sin, although, as in this instance, it was not felt at the time, but afterwards. It had been declared by that All Wise Being who never errs, that the idolaters, if allowed to remain, would be "a snare to them," and lead them into idolatry, and thus draw upon them the displeasure of God. This warning they disregarded, and the command they disobeyed ; and the consequence of their disobedience will be clearly traced in the misfortunes which overwhelmed them, during more than three hundred years.

Before dismissing the three tribes to their lands beyond the Jordan, Joshua, assisted by Eleazer the High Priest, divided the land among the remaining nine tribes, excepting the Levites, who had not a separate district, but four cities in the territories of each of the other tribes. The tribes made up the number of twelve, by the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, being each considered as one. Manasseh had not only a district on the other side of Jordan, but had also another allotment within, near to Ephraim, and Issachar ; hence the expression, "the half tribe of Manasseh," which refers to these two

divisions. The following is a brief outline of the Geography of Canaan, which may assist our young readers in consulting any map of Ancient Palestine, divided into Tribes.

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Canaan is bounded on the

North, by Syria and Phœnicia.  
 South, — Idumea or Edom, and Arabia  
                   Petræa.  
 East, — Arabia Deserta.  
 West, — The Mediterranean, called in  
                   Scripture the Great Sea.

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Districts of the Tribes.	Chief Cities.
Judah* . . . . .	Part of Jerusalem. Bethlehem. Hebron. Engedi. Ziklag.
Simeon . . . . .	Gerari. Gaza. Ascalon.

(This Tribe soon became lost, and many of the Cities long remained in the hands of the Philistines.)

\* Some of the towns here put down belong properly to a later period of the history, but are inserted to avoid repetition.

**THE ARNON**—runs through the plains of Moab, and enters the Dead Sea, on the east.

**THE BROOK KEDRON**—passes under the walls of Jerusalem, between the City and the Mount of Olives, and runs into the Dead Sea.

**THE RIVER OF EGYPT**—a small stream running into the Mediterranean, near Rhinocolura. It is always spoken of as the southern boundary of Canaan, (by some thought to be the Brook Bezor, and by others the River Nile.)

**THE BROOK KISHON**—this river runs near Mount Carmel, and through the valley of Jezreel.

The principal Mountains are—

Lebanon Mountains.

Anti-Libanus Mountains.

Hermon Mountains.

Mountains of Gilead.

Mount Carmel.

Mount Tabor.

Mount Calvary, }  
Mount of Olives, } both near Jerusalem.

Mount Sion, }  
Mount Moriah, } on which stood Jerusalem.  
Mount Acra, }

Mount Pisgah, } probably different summits in  
Mount Nebo, } the Abarim Mountains.

**Lakes.**

The Dead Sea, or Lake of Asphaltites.

The Lake of Gennesareth, or Sea of Galilee, or  
Sea of Tiberias.

The Waters of Merom.

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**Division of the Land.**

Independent of the general allotment of each tribe and family, Joshua and Caleb were rewarded for their steadfast faith, by a separate and distinct gift of property. Caleb received the City of Hebron,\* in the district of Judah; and Joshua, that of Timnath-Serah, in Mount Ephraim. It is remarkable, that the cities of the Levites of the branch of the Kohathites, to which belonged the family of the High Priest and all who officiated in the tabernacle service, were within the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin; thus, when the separation of the tribes took place at a later period, the priests were in the near neighbourhood of the temple of Jerusalem, and naturally remained attached to the kingdom of Judah, on whose rightful throne sat the family of David, and in which kingdom the worship of the True God continued for a longer period unstained with the sins and vices of idolatry.

\* Or, Kirgath-Arba.

Before the final division of the land was finished, Joshua had removed the camp from Gilgal, and set up the Tabernacle at Shiloh, a town in the tribe of Ephraim, about twenty-five miles north of Jerusalem. Here the ark remained until carried out to battle, about three hundred years afterwards, by the disobedient sons of Eli, when it was taken by the Philistines. At this place, the sacrifices appointed by the law were daily offered; hither the priests came up in their courses to serve the Lord; and here the people, however widely separated in their homes, and inflamed with anger (as they sometimes were) against each other, met on holy ground, and, with one common feeling of gratitude for their national blessings, to worship in one temple the God of their fathers, and their own. To infringe, in any manner, this wise and divine appointment was a crime, and justly looked upon with terror by a people who had felt the anger of the Lord, when they joined the worshippers of Baal at the artful instigation of Balak. To this natural and laudable feeling, is to be attributed the indignation which the people expressed, when they heard that the tribes, Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had, on reaching their own territories, erected an altar at the place where they repossessed the Jordan: this was supposed to be done with the design of offering sacrifices, and thus separating themselves from the religious communion of the rest of the nation. They prepared, in the heat of their indignation, to go to

war with their brethren, but were prevented by the timely explanation of the three tribes, who declared that the monument was not intended as an altar for sacrifice, but simply as a memorial of their taking possession of the land: and to prove to their descendants that, though separated by the Jordan from the other tribes, they were of the same chosen race,—the inheritors of the same divine blessings.

The Tribes having received their portions, and taken possession of their inheritance, the land rested in peace, under the wise rule of Joshua, and the Elders. Many years passed tranquilly, and no event of importance is recorded by the sacred historian.\* At length, when Joshua was old and well stricken in years, feeling his end approaching, he assembled the people once more around him, (probably when they came up to attend the LORD at Shiloh, at one of their feasts,) and in earnest and affectionate language, exhorted them to continue true to the worship of Jehovah, and obedient to His Laws. "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the Law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom, to the right hand nor to the left. That ye come not

\* *Many years.*—The time of rest from the final division of the land to Joshua's death, is not exactly ascertained, but the opinion of Josephus is perhaps the most correct, which is, that the first division of the land took place about five years after the passage of the Jordan; the second division five or seven years later. Joshua survived this final allotment about fifteen years, his government lasting in all about twenty-five years.

among these nations, those that remain among you, neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves before them: But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done this day. For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but as for you, no man hath been able to stand before you, unto this day. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the LORD your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you. Take good heed, therefore, unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God, Else if you do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you. And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you; and all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof: "Therefore it shall come to pass, That as all good things are come upon you which the LORD your God promised; so shall the LORD bring upon you all the evil things, until he have

destroyed you from off this good land, which the LORD your God hath given you. When ye have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which he commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed yourselves to them; then shall the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and ye shall perish quickly from off the good land which he hath given unto you." Besides this solemn exhortation, Joshua again addressed the assembled tribes at Shechem,\* and called upon them to declare their adherence to the covenant their fathers had made with Moses, and their faith in Jehovah the True and Only God.

"Now, therefore, fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your father served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell: but for me and my house we will serve the LORD."

"And the people answered, and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods. For the LORD our God he it is that

\* *Shechem* is, by many, supposed to be here put for Shiloh, where the ark was: others consider it to be correctly written Shechem, and that the ark was removed thither for the occasion: there was something peculiarly appropriate in the idea, it being where Abraham had first received the promise that his descendants should possess the land.



brought us up, and our fathers, out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed: And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God."

Again Joshua warned the people of the danger of falling into idolatry, and again the people answered, "Nay, but we will serve the LORD."

"So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us: for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God."

"So Joshua let the people depart every man to his inheritance."

"And it came to pass after these things that Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD died; being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance, in Timnath-Serah, which is in Mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash."

"And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel."

"And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. And Eleazer the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in Mount Ephraim."

Thus closes the book of Joshua, and the history of the Israelites during his government. Eminently fitted both as a warrior, and the chosen companion of Moses, to be the leader of the people of Israel, he terminated the long war of conquest, and settled them in peace in the Promised Land. After this, his wisdom still directed their counsels and preserved them from anarchy and disunion, the too frequent attendants upon a long struggle for independance. When he died, the elders who had assisted him in the government, continued to have such an influence over the minds of their countrymen, that, during their lives, no idolatry tempted them from the worship of Jehovah, and prosperity and happiness rewarded the chosen people for their obedience,

End of the Book of Joshua.

## CHAPTER IV.

THE ISRAELITES FALL INTO IDOLATRY: ARE CONQUERED BY THE CANAANITES. OTHNIEL, CALEB'S NEPHEW, DELIVERS THEM. SHAMGAR. EHUD KILLS EGLON, KING OF MOAB. DEBORAH AND BARAK.

WE are now arrived at that portion of the history of the Israelites, which is contained in the Book of the Old Testament, entitled, Judges.\* It gives an account of the Israelites falling into idolatry, and of their being deserted by God in consequence, and given into the hands of their enemies; a punishment which it had been solemnly predicted by Moses and by Joshua should befall them. On their repentance, they addressed their prayers to God, who alone could save them; and we shall find that He mercifully heard their cry, and raised up men who were endowed with power from on high to conquer the idolaters, and to redeem the Israelites from bondage. These men became the leaders or Judges of the people, and hence the name of Judges is given to the Book which recounts their history.

\* The Book of Judges is generally supposed to have been compiled by the prophet Samuel. The period of time which the administration of the Judges occupied, is variously calculated: by some it is made to last nearly 500 years, by others only 300 years, reckoning from the death of Joshua to the death of Samson.

After the death of the Elders who lived contemporary with Joshua, the people gradually deserted the worship of the true God, and worshipped the false gods of the Canaanites around: "they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth."\* It is probable that they were first invited to the feasts in honor of these divinities, at which the greatest licence prevailed, and which were celebrated with all the pomp and festivity which that rude and barbarous age allowed. No sin was forbidden; vice of every kind was encouraged; and idolatry was thus made enticing, by administering to the lowest and worst passions. To these feasts the Israelites ought never to have gone; but they disobeyed a command, the importance of which they perhaps did not fully understand at the time, but which they knew was imposed by an All Wise God, and in thus yielding to present temptation, they incurred the heavy penalties attached to sin and disobedience.

After the death of Joshua, some of the tribes

\* Baal and Ashtaroth—the chief god and goddess of the Canaanites and Phœnicians. They are by many supposed to represent the Sun and the Moon, the great objects of worship throughout the East. The most cruel and horrid rites were performed in honour of these divinities; usually in dark groves and on the tops of mountains, and hence the Israelites are forbidden to worship in high places, and commanded to cut down the groves where these impious rites were carried on. Baal sometimes signifies only one *Idol*; and Baalim, the plural, *Idols* generally; without meaning the particular Idol of any nation. Baal signifies *lord*.

made occasional efforts to subdue the Canaanites, who still occupied a portion of their territory ; but these efforts were not persevered in, and soon many of the tribes joined the nations of the land in their idol worship, and mixed themselves with them in a manner directly opposed to the wise regulations of Moses. Sometimes one tribe alone attacked the cities, or forts of the Canaanites, in their own portion of the country ; at other times, two or more of the tribes united together, and carried on regular warfare for many years. In this state of affairs, several events occur which mark the unsettled condition of the country, and the little regard which was paid to any law but that of force : but these details are otherwise unimportant in themselves, and are of too cruel and revolting a nature to be read without pain and disgust. One alone is sufficient to show the savage manners of that age. The tribes of Simeon and Judah attacked Adoni-bezek, king of Bezek, and utterly defeated him. This cruel king had made it a practice to cut off the thumbs and great toes of the prisoners of note, whom he took in war, and had treated them with every species of insult and indignity. He was himself treated as he had treated others : his thumbs and toes were cut off, and he was then brought to Jerusalem, where he died. In that age such cruelties were but too common in war, and they are still frequent among nations not blessed with a knowledge of the mild precepts of Jesus. Adoni-bezek acknowledged the justice of his

sentence. "Three-score and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me."

The first king who was permitted to subdue the Israelites, in consequence of their falling into idolatry, was Cushan-rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia. They served him eight years. Then the people repented of their sins, and cried unto the LORD. God mercifully listened to their cry, and raised up Othniel, the nephew of Caleb, and gave him power to deliver his countrymen from the yoke of servitude. Othniel judged Israel forty years, during all which time the land enjoyed peace.

After the death of Othniel, the Israelites "again did evil in the sight of the LORD," and they were given up into the hands of Eglon, king of Moab; who invaded the country on the side of Jericho, the city of palm trees, which he took possession of. Under this king they remained eighteen years; when, repenting of their disobedience, the LORD raised them up a deliverer, in the person of Ehud, a Benjamite, who was left-handed, or, able to use his left hand equally with his right.\* Ehud went to Eglon, accompanied with

\* It appears that the men of the tribe of Benjamin were renowned for the power of using their left hand equally with the right; whether Ehud was thus ambidexter, or could use both hands alike, or only left-handed, seems uncertain. It is mentioned on one occasion, when the Benjamites went out to war, that "amongst all this people there were seven hundred chosen men left-handed; every one could sling stones at an hair's

a suitable train, bearing a present, which was probably a species of tribute; this being commonly paid in the East in the form of a voluntary offering. After presenting his gift, Ehud dismissed the persons who had borne it; but he himself, after going a short distance on his return, went back and demanded to speak to the king in private, saying that he had a secret errand unto him. Eglon was sitting in a summer parlour detached from the house, where he slept in the afternoon, during the extreme heat of the day, as is the custom with the inhabitants of hot countries. Eglon, having sent away his attendants, Ehud drew near as if to speak to him; when, drawing a two-edged dagger which he had girded on under his raiment on his right thigh, (where, he would not be suspected of carrying one,) he stabbed Eglon, and killed him. The blow having been given with great violence, Ehud could not draw out his dagger, but leaving it, he went forth, and locking the doors of the parlour after him, made his escape, and fled in haste, until he reached Seirath. When the servants saw him depart, they went to their master, but finding the entrance fastened, they concluded that he was sleeping, and had locked the doors to avoid being disturbed: "And

breadth and not miss. The prophetic blessing of Jacob (Genesis xlix. 27) predicts the warlike character of this tribe. "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and in the evening he shall divide the spoil." The men were expert in all the arts of attack and defence.

they tarried till they were ashamed : and behold, he opened not the doors of the parlour ; therefore they took a key and opened them : and behold, their lord was fallen down dead on the earth. And Ehud escaped while they tarried and passed beyond the quarries, and escaped unto Seirath. And it came to pass when he was come, he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them. And he said unto them, Follow after me ; for the LORD hath delivered your enemies into your hand." Ehud then led the Israelites to the fords of the river Jordan, thus intercepting the Moabites in their flight homewards, after the death of their king, as well as preventing those from beyond Jordan coming to their assistance ; here he slew great numbers of them, and completely subdued this powerful nation. After this victory the Israelites had rest for eighty years.

It is necessary to observe here and elsewhere, that, although the Judges, or leaders, are said in the Scriptures, to be raised up in an especial manner by the LORD, to deliver the repentant Israelites from their oppressors, it is no where said, nor implied, that these leaders were divinely directed in all their particular actions ; much less that their own characters were rendered free from the prevailing vices and opinions of the age and country in which they lived. Treachery and cruelty were too often regarded as virtues, in the state of half-civilization in which the world



then was. The laws of Moses taught that humanity and truth were to be observed even towards enemies ; but it required time for these laws and precepts to produce any lasting effect upon the habits of the people, and it must always be remembered, that no miracle was ever worked upon the minds and will of the Israelites, to make them good and estimable characters. Thus, Ehud was endued with power to conquer the Moabites ; or rather, his enterprize was permitted to succeed ; but the exact manner in which he executed it, and the use he made of it, proceeded from himself, and must be judged of by the same rule as the action of any other individual living in that age. We should not blame him for acting as his imperfect knowledge, and the habits of his country dictated ; but we most certainly must not think that we, with the knowledge of Christian principles we possess, should be justified in acting in the same manner, as he, or any other individual in that age, acted under their particular influences.

The next Judge is Shamgar, of whom we only know that he repulsed the Philistines ; a powerful nation whose cities were chiefly in the tribe of Simeon and Dan, and who had never been wholly subdued.\* Shamgar was probably a husbandman, and engaged in his usual occupation, when roused to revenge his countrymen on their cruel oppressors : with an ox's goad, which is

\* Their chief cities were—Gath, Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon, and Gaza.

described by modern travellers as a pole six or eight feet long, pointed at the end with iron, he attacked the Philistines, and slew six hundred of them.

After this deliverance, the Israelites again did evil in the sight of the LORD, and were again punished by being given over to Jabin, the King of Hazor, a district in the north of Canaan.

"And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron: and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel."

"And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment."

"And she sent and called Barak, the son of Abinoam, out of Kedesh-naphtali, and said unto him, Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go and draw toward Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun: And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon, Sisera, the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand."

This message being delivered in so solemn a manner by a prophetess, it was a direct command from God; but Barak wanted faith, or trust in the Divine Being, and was afraid to go

alone against the Canaanites ; and we shall see that his distrust was punished, by his losing the honor which he would have gained, had he shown a firmer faith, and more ready obedience.

“And Barak said unto her, If thou wilt go with me, then I will go : but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.”

“And she said, I will surely go with thee : notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honor ; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.”

“And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh ; and he went up, with ten thousand men at his feet : and Deborah went up with him.\* Now Heber the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses,† had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh.”

“And they showed, (or told) Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam was gone up to Mount

\* *Ten thousand men at his feet, or after him.* By some persons this expression is thought to signify that the men were foot soldiers ; but the more probable interpretation is, that the men were *subject to his authority*, or that Barak was at the head of ten thousand men. The expression is common in the East ; Generals and Governors are said to have the people who are under them, “at their feet.” The King of England is spoken of as having “millions at his feet.”

† Hobab, another name of Jethro, and the name of his son also.

Tabor. And Sisera gathered together all his chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him, from Harosheth of the Gentiles, unto the river of Kishon."

"And Deborah said unto Barak, Up; for this is the day in which the LORD hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the LORD gone out before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him."

"And the LORD discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles; and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword; and there was not a man left. Howbeit Sisera fled away on his feet to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite;\* for there was peace between Jabin the king of Hazor, and the house of Heber the Kenite."

"And Jael went out to meet Sisera, and said unto him, Turn in, my lord, turn in to me; fear not. And when he had turned in unto her into her tent, she covered him with a mantle. And he said unto her, Give me, I pray thee, a little

\* The Kenites were the descendants of Hobab, the brother-in-law of Moses, who had accompanied him as a guide through the desert, and was promised an inheritance amongst the Israelites. The Kenites appear to have continued to follow their usual mode of life, and dwelt in tents, something in the manner of the modern Arabs.

water to drink: for I am thirsty. And she opened a bottle of milk, and gave him drink, and covered him."

"Again he said unto her, Stand in the door of the tent, and it shall be, when any man doth come and enquire of thee, and say, Is there any man here? that thou shalt say, No:"

"Then Jael, Heber's wife, took a nail of the tent,\* and took an hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground: for he was fast asleep, and weary. So he died."

"And, behold, as Barak pursued Sisera, Jael came out to meet him, and said unto him, Come, and I will shew thee the man whom thou seekest. And when he came into her tent, behold, Sisera, lay dead, and the nail was in his temples."

The conduct of Jael was treacherous, and peculiarly revolting in a woman; and, though it was allowed to succeed in destroying an oppressor of the Israelites, it is not, therefore, to be regarded as a good or justifiable action, fit for our imitation; though in every respect consonant to the manners of that age. The merciful Providence of God overrules all events to produce good; even the bad passions and evil actions of men are, without their knowledge, made the means of contributing to His all-wise designs; but this does not render them deserving of praise, much less of imitation; nor are they recorded for this purpose. Actions

\* The nail, or large iron spike which fastens the cords of the tent into the ground.

of this nature are related simply as facts which really took place, and which brought about the events which God had predicted by his prophets: it is clear, however, that the prediction of a crime is not intended to justify it, but only to prove the fore-knowledge and power of Jehovah, and establish the authority of His chosen servants.

The release of the Israelites from the heavy yoke of Jabin, king of the Canaanites, was celebrated in a splendid ode, the most perfect perhaps of the kind ever written. Its object was to commemorate the triumphs of the chosen people over their oppressors, to praise the tribes which had marched against the enemy, and upbraid those which had remained at home, for their desertion of the common cause: it describes the desolation of the country under the tyranny of Jabin, "when the high-ways were unoccupied," and the "inhabitants of the villages ceased," because of the general insecurity of property: the ode concludes with a poetical account of the death of Sisera by the hand of Jael, who is held up to honor as a deliverer of Israel. There are some parts which do not accord with the mild and forgiving precepts of Christianity, though in conformity with the spirit of the age; the whole is, however, too beautiful, and too interesting as a specimen of ancient lyric poetry, to be omitted.

## THE SONG OF DEBORAH AND BARAK:

"Then sung Deborah and Barak, the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

"Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

"Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the LORD; I will sing praise to the LORD God of Israel.

"LORD, when thou wentest out of Seir, when thou marchedst out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water.

"The mountains melted from before the LORD, even that Sinai from before the LORD God of Israel.

"In the days of Shamgar the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the high-ways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through by-ways.

"The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel.

"They chose new gods: then was war in the gates; was there a shield or spear seen among forty thousand in Israel?\*

"My heart is toward the governors of Israel,

\* It has always been the common practice of tyrants to disarm their subjects, and this seems to have been the case with the Canaanitish kings who enslaved the Israelites.

that offered themselves willingly among the people. Bless ye the LORD.

“Speak, ye that ride on white asses;\* ye that sit in judgment and walk by the way.

“They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD, even the righteous acts towards the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates.†

“Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.

“Then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people: the LORD made me have dominion over the mighty.

“Out of Ephraim was there a root of them against Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among

\* “*Ye that ride on white asses.*” The white ass was an animal of great beauty, and far more valuable than the common ass, though in the East, this latter is a finer animal than those of the race commonly seen in England, where they are too often ill-used and ill-fed. Persons of distinction alone rode upon white asses, and we sometimes read of men of an inferior station, when they affected to imitate the manners of their superiors, purchasing these rare animals and riding upon them in state.

† The wells were places of general resort, and of the highest importance in that climate; and here the Israelites were doubtless frequently attacked by the Canaanites. Here, also, when released from bondage, the people would rehearse to each other the victory of Deborah and Barak, and rejoice over their happy deliverance from the tyranny of Jabin, while they once more watered their flocks in peaceful security.



thy people; out of Machir came down governors, and out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.

“And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah, even Issachar, and also Barak: he was sent on foot into the valley: For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.

“Why abodest thou amongst the sheep folds, to hear the bleatings of the flock? For the divisions of Reuben there was great searchings of heart.

“Gilead abode beyond Jordan: and why did Dan remain in ships? Asher continued on the sea shore, and abode in his breaches.

“Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.

“The kings came and fought, then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo; they took no gain of money.

“They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera.

“The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my-soul, thou hast trodden down strength.

“Then were the horsehoofs broken by means of the pransings: the pransings of their mighty ones.

“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof: because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.

"Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

"He asked for water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

"She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workman's hammer: and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

"At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed there he fell down dead.

"The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice. Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?

"Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,

"Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey? "to Sisera a prey of divers colors, a prey of divers colors of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?"

"So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

After the defeat of Jabin the Israelites had rest for forty years,

## CHAPTER V.

GIDEON DELIVERS THE ISRAELITES FROM THE YOKE  
OF THE MIDIANITES AND AMALEKITES.

ABIMELECK.

THE Israelites again "did evil in the sight of the LORD," when the remembrance of the tyranny of Jabin had passed away, and another generation had arisen in the room of those who had suffered from it. Then the punishments so solemnly predicted by Moses and Joshua, came once more upon them, and they were given into the hands of their enemies; those very idolaters whose sinful worship they had joined. During this servitude, their sufferings were even greater than before; for the Midianites, into whose power they were delivered, were a nation resembling the present Bedouin Arabs; they lived a predatory life, wandering from place to place, and never settling in towns, but over-running a country and laying it waste, carrying off the cattle, and gathering or destroying the crops which the husbandmen had sown. No fixed payment, however heavy, secured the Israelites from the inroads of these wild and warlike tribes; and the misery caused by their oppressions was so great, that the wretched people deserted their homes, and took refuge in dens and caves in the mountains.

“And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the East, even they came up against them: And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude: for both they and their camels were without number, and they entered into the land to destroy it.”

This dreadful desolation continued seven years; at the end of which time, the repentant people found mercy in that great and good God, who is always more ready to hear, than his creatures are to ask His blessing. A prophet was first sent to warn them of their guilt, in having followed after the gods of the Amorites and forsaken the pure worship of Jehovah, and to remind them of the threatenings which had been so frequently repeated, foretelling the misery which would always follow their disobedience of this great command. Immediately afterwards, a deliverer was raised up, and appointed to free the Israelites in the following manner:

Gideon, the son of Joash, of the tribe of Manasseh, was thrashing wheat by the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites, when an angel of the LORD appeared to him, and addressed him in these words, “The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.”

"And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

To this sorrowful complaint, Gideon received an encouraging reply, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hands of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"

Gideon felt afraid of the power of the enemy; he said, his family was poor in Manasseh, and he was the least of his father's house; and when the angel again assured him that the LORD would be with him, and he should smite the Midianites as one man, Gideon asked for a sign, that he might know that it was indeed a messenger from the LORD who had appeared to him, and given him a divine command. "If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee and bring forth my present, and set it before thee."

"And the Angel said, I will tarry until thou come again."

"And Gideon went in and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it."

"And the Angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so."

"Then the Angel of the LORD put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh, and the unleavened cakes: and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the Angel of the LORD departed out of his sight."

Gideon erected an altar to the LORD on the spot where the Angel had appeared to him; and that night he received a command to throw down the altar of Baal, which his father, in weak and wicked compliance with the idolatrous customs of their conquerors, had built near his house. Accordingly, Gideon, in obedience to the divine will, took ten men of his servants, and did as the LORD had said unto him; and so it was that because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. In the place of the altar of Baal which he destroyed, Gideon built an altar to the LORD, and offered a bullock upon it in sacrifice.

"And when the men of the city arose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built."

"And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they enquired and

asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing."

"Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die: because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it."

"And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him! he that will plead for him let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar."\*

To this just rebuke, there could be no reply; but the Midianites resolved to maintain their usurpation, and being joined by the Amalekites, they assembled their forces, and pitched their camp in the valley of Jezreel. To the vast host of the idolaters, the Israelites had apparently to oppose only those of their tribes which could be hastily assembled, men who were dispirited with seven years of heavy servitude, inexperienced in war, and not firmly united among themselves. But there is One above who rules unseen over the destiny of men, who was the defender and protector of the Israelites, and he appointed Gideon to deliver them from the yoke of their oppressors; the spirit of the LORD came upon him; he blew his trumpet, and sent messengers through

\* On this occasion, Joash gave his son the surname of Jerubbaal, or, *let Baal plead*, because he had thrown down the altar of Baal, and Baal had not 'pleaded for,' or defended himself.

all Manasseh, and to the tribes of Asher, Naphtali, and Zebulun, who quickly obeyed the summons. Before setting forth on so important an enterprize, Gideon desired a further assurance of the Divine will, and asked for a sign to be given him. He prayed to God, and said "If thou wilt save Israel, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water."

Then Gideon prayed, and asked for another sign: he said, "Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew upon all the ground."

After receiving this encouraging mark of God's blessing upon his enterprize, Gideon placed himself at the head of the assembled Israelites, and marched towards the encampment of the Midianites. But his army was too numerous; it amounted to many thousands; and had the Israelites gained the victory with so large a force, they would probably have been led to ascribe their success to their own efforts, and not to the



true cause, namely, the Divine favor. Gideon was therefore commanded to proclaim permission to all to return home, 'who were in any wise fearful or afraid.'<sup>\*</sup> Great numbers accepted the proffered release, and the army was diminished more than half. It remained however too numerous; and the following method was adopted to determine which should be dismissed. The people were brought to a stream, and as they drank of the water, some knelt down to drink, while others stood upright, and putting their hands to their mouths, lapped the water as a dog. Three hundred only drank in this latter way, and these, as the more alert, were chosen to follow Gideon: the rest were dismissed, every man to his tent. The army, thus reduced to a mere handful of men, was then led by Gideon to the hill of Moreh, at the foot of which the enemy was encamped.

"And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him, Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand. But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant, unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host. And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the East, lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude: and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude."

<sup>\*</sup> This was in strict conformity with the law of Moses. See *Deut. xx.*, 8.

"And when Gideon was come, behold there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and lo! a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, and the tent lay along. And his fellow answered and said, this is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian and all the host. And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise: for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian."\*

\* There are some curious observations upon this part of the history in the notes to the Pictorial Bible: It is justly remarked first, that the office of Spy was not considered dishonorable in former times, as it is now. In the Iliad, Homer makes one of his favorite heroes, Diomedes, undertake to go as a Spy into the Trojan camp, for which meritorious deed he is to reap renown 'extensive as the heavens, and fair reward,' and he is accompanied by Ulysses, who is chosen out of a number of princes all eager for the honor. Alfred going into the Danish camp, is an instance in our own country; and innumerable others might be adduced both from fabulous and true history. Another observation upon the dream of the Midianite soldier, is highly interesting—the cake of barley meal which "came down from heaven," was strikingly applicable to Gideon's little band, which was encamped upon the *hill* of Moreh, overlooking the camp of the Midianites, and it's being a *barley* cake (not *wheaten*) was intended to mark its poverty and insignificance; wheat having very early superseded the use of barley, which was chiefly used for cattle. At a later period, when the soldiers of a Roman cohort had disgraced themselves, they were punished by having only barley bread for food.

“And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man’s hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers. And he said unto them, Look on me, and do likewise: and behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that as I do, so shall ye do. When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpet also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the LORD, and of Gideon.”

“So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal, and they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon.”

The sudden flash of light, caused by the breaking of the pitchers which concealed the lamps, and the noise of shouting on every side, terrified the Midianites, and in the darkness they could not distinguish either the small number of their assailants, or the direction of their attack. A supernatural terror seized them: they mistook their friends for enemies, and fell upon each other; “the LORD set every man’s sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.”

To render the success of this sudden overthrow complete, Gideon summoned all the forces he had lately dismissed, and pursued after the discomfited Midianites and Amalekites: He sent messengers to the tribe of Ephraim, exhorting them to arm instantly, and secure the fords of the river Jordan; either to prevent the enemy from escaping, or, as seems more probable, to prevent their being joined by fresh bodies of these wandering bands, who were likely to hasten to their assistance. The Ephraimites did as Gideon commanded; the Midianites were hotly pursued, and two of their princes, Oreb and Zeeb, were taken and slain. The Ephraimites then reproached Gideon with not having called them earlier to share in the enterprize. With a man of a haughty spirit, this unreasonable complaint might have produced dissention and civil strife, more disastrous than the oppression of their foreign conquerors; but a gentle and flattering reply dispelled the danger. Gideon answered, "What have I done now in comparison of you? Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim, better than the vintage of Abiezer?" God hath delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated towards him." So true it is that "a soft answer turneth away wrath."

The Israelites, grateful for their deliverance, desired to make Gideon their ruler.—"Rule

\* Abiezer.—The ancestor of Gideon's family.

thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also : for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian." But Gideon refused an honor, which he considered to be a violation of their sacred law ; " I will not rule over you," he replied, " neither shall my son rule over you ; the Lord shall rule over you." Yet was Gideon at the same time guilty of a violation of a law the most important, which had been reiterated with the most solemn threatening and warnings. He requested the Israelites to give him the golden earrings which they had taken from their slaughtered enemies, and of these and the splendid garments of the Midian princes he made an ephod, and placed it in his own city of Ophrah. The exact nature of this trophy it is rather difficult to determine : but the most probable suggestion is, that Gideon having once been commanded to erect an altar and offer a sacrifice upon it, now took upon himself the office of a priest, or acted in that capacity occasionally, and in so doing set up a worship distinct from that of Shiloh, and thus violated a fundamental law of their religion.

Gideon lived to an advanced age in honor, and the nation prospered ; but after his death " the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side ; neither showed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel."

Then Abimelech, one of Gideon's numerous sons, formed the horrible design of slaying all his brethren, and seizing upon the crown which his father Gideon had rejected. He drew into his party the men of Shechem, where his mother's family lived, and, accompanied by a band of vain and light persons, he went unto his father's house at Ophrah, and slew his brethren on one stone; Jotham alone, the youngest son of Gideon, hid himself and escaped.

"And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem."

"And when they told it to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you: The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them: and they said unto the Olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and Man, and go to be promoted

over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon. Now therefore, if ye have done truly and sincerely, in that ye have made Abimelech king, and if ye have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done unto him according to the deserving of his hands, (For my father fought for you, and adventured his life for, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian. And ye are risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, threescore and ten persons, upon one stone, and have made Abimelech king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother.) If ye then have dealt truly and sincerely with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice ye in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you. But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech."

"And Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and dwelt there, for fear of Abimelech his brother."

The parable of Jotham is the oldest parable, or fable, extant. It has always been a favorite method of conveying instruction and reproof in the East, where the existence of despotic power

and violent passions, render direct admonition dangerous, and likely to be little attended to.\*

The iniquitous reign of Abimelech was not of long duration. At the expiration of three years, the inhabitants of Shechem were weary of their king, and revolted against him. Abimelech quelled the insurrection, and slew great numbers of the Shechemites; but soon afterwards going to attack Thebez, a city of the tribe of Ephraim near to Shechem, which had joined in the revolt, a woman cast a piece of millstone from the top of a tower upon his head, and killed him.† Thus did the inhuman cruelty of Abimelech gain for him the misery of about three years of disputed dominion; a name remembered in his country with execration, and a soul polluted with the blackest crimes which Ambition can perpetrate.

\* Addison refers to this parable in the 183rd paper of the Spectator, in which he gives an account of Fables and their antiquity.

† To avoid the disgrace of dying by the hand of a woman, Abimelech commanded his armour-bearer to draw his sword and slay him.



## CHAPTER VI.

TOLA. JAIR. JEPHTHAH'S RASH VOW. IBZAN.

ELON. ABDON.

Two successive Judges arose in Israel, after the death of Abimelech, of whom nothing remarkable is recorded. Tola, of the tribe of Issachar, governed for twenty-three years; and Jair, a Gileadite, judged Israel twenty-two years. During the continuance, or at the close of their government, the Israelites again forsook the worship of the true God, and fell into idolatry. For this sin they were punished by being given up into the power of the Philistines on the south, and the Ammonites on the east, who oppressed them during eighteen years. On their repenting, they prayed to God to forgive their sin, and deliver them from their enemies. Their prayer was at first rejected; but on their putting away the strange gods from among them, and serving the LORD in sincerity, He again listened to their cry, and raised them up a deliverer in the person of Jephthah, the Gileadite.

Jephthah, having been deprived of a share in the inheritance of his father by his brethren, had fled from them, and dwelt to the east of Gilead, in the land of Tob. But when the Ammonites invaded the country, the elders of

Gilead went to fetch Jephthah out of the land of Tob :

“ And they said to Jephthah, Come, and be our captain, that we may fight with the children of Ammon. And Jephthah said to the elders of Gilead. Did not ye hate me, and expel me out of my father's house? and why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?”

“ And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, Therefore we turn again to thee now, that thou mayest go with us, and fight against the children of Ammon, and be our head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.”

“ And Jephthah said unto the elders of Gilead, If ye bring me home again to fight against the children of Ammon, and the LORD deliver them before me, shall I be your head?”

“ And the elders of Gilead said unto Jephthah, the LORD be witness between us, if we do not so according to thy words.”

“ Then Jephthah went with the elders of Gilead, and the people made him head and captain over them: and Jephthah uttered all his words before the LORD in Mizpeh.”

After sending a fruitless embassy to the king of the children of Ammon, to remonstrate with him on his invasion, Jephthah assembled the Israelites, and marched out to meet the Ammonites. Before beginning his enterprize, he made a vow, in the manner of a heathen rather than of a worshipper of God, (by whose mild law no

such vows were enjoined) that he would consecrate to the LORD the first object that came out of his house to meet him on his return, should the LORD bless his undertaking, and render him successful against the enemy.

"And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the LORD, and said, If thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD's, and (*or*) I will offer it up for a burnt offering."\*

\* The marginal translation of this passage is, "or I will offer it up for a burnt offering." It is stated by learned commentators that the Hebrew particle may be rendered by either of the conjunctions, '*or*' or '*and*;' the sense usually determining the rendering. But, in this instance, the difference in the conjunction materially affects the sense of the passage. If '*or*' is used, the meaning is obvious; that Jephthah foresaw the possibility, nay probability, of some human being coming forth from his house to meet him, which it was contrary to the law to offer in sacrifice; such would likewise be any unclean animal, as a dog or an ass, which yet were quite as likely to be seen first by Jephthah on his return as any other animal. Also, as Jephthah states it to be *whatever should come forth of the doors of his house to meet him*, that he would devote to the LORD, it seems scarcely possible that he should not contemplate the possibility of a human being coming to meet and welcome him. Yet to offer human sacrifices was so expressly forbidden by the Divine Law, that he would hardly openly propose to offer such a sacrifice, in order to obtain the blessing of God upon his enterprize. It is stated by those who contend that Jephthah's daughter was really sacrificed, that though she could not be offered upon the Altar of the Tabernacle at Shiloh, Jephthah might sacrifice her himself, in the manner of the heathens;

After making this rash vow, Jephthah met the Ammonites in battle, and totally defeated them with great slaughter. Twenty cities were taken; and then, having driven back the oppressors, and entirely cleared the country of these terrible invaders, the successful leader of the Israelites returned home.

"And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter. And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, Alas, my daughter! thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. And she said unto him, My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which

and also, that, as the most revolting and barbarous idolatry had prevailed in the countries beyond the Jordan, his mind would be familiarized to the idea of such sacrifices. To this it may be replied, that Jephthah is no where stated to be an idolater; and that if he had been, it is hardly to be expected that he would have been selected as the deliverer of the Israelites from the Ammonites. On the contrary, whatever may have been his character in other respects, he speaks throughout as a zealous worshipper of the true God, saying "if the Lord deliver them before me," and uttering "all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh," and even laying claim to the country because "the Lord God of Israel had dispossessed the Ammonites from before his people Israel." Such language appears inconsistent if uttered by a man ready, and even purposing, to act in direct violation of a Divine command repeatedly given, and guarded with the most awful denunciations.

hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the LORD hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon." She then asked to be permitted to go away with her companions and bewail her fate for two months, which she did; but at the end of the two months she returned unto her father, "who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed:" What the exact nature of this vow was, is a question much disputed by commentators: by some it is thought that Jephthah actually sacrificed his daughter, as he would have done an animal appointed for a burnt offering; by others it is considered that she was only devoted in an especial manner to the LORD, lived apart from common life, did not marry, and was in some way (not perfectly understood at this distance of time) consecrated to sacred and religious duties.\* Even according to this milder interpretation of the vow, Jephthah was called upon to make a most painful sacrifice: his

\* It is objected that there is no foundation for supposing women to be consecrated to the LORD, as no office was assigned to them in the Tabernacle service. Calmet, indeed, supposes that there were women in attendance at the Tabernacle; but the daughter of Jephthah could not have joined these, as her father was at war with the tribe of Ephraim, in whose territory, Shiloh was situated. The idea might, nevertheless, have been taken from the heathens, by whom a single life apart from domestic ties, was early considered a sort of holy consecration to heaven.

On this subject we refer our readers to the numerous works of able and learned commentators, who have fully entered into the difficulties of the question.

daughter was removed from the endearing intercourse of domestic life, and, she being his only child, his inheritance would descend to strangers; this latter circumstance was looked upon as the greatest calamity which could befall an Israelite, as all entertained hopes of the Messiah being descended from them. It is right, however, to state that difficulties attend even this interpretation of the vow; and many learned men, amongst whom may be mentioned several of the fathers, as Chrysostom, Jerome, and Ambrose, together with the Jewish historian Josephus, consider Jephthah to have actually sacrificed his daughter, and that God permitted him to do so, as a punishment for his rashness and want of faith in making the vow.

When Jephthah returned successful from the war against the Ammonites, he received a haughty and overbearing message from the Ephraimites, who reproached him, as they had on a similar occasion reproached Gideon, with not having summoned them to his assistance, and shared with them the honor of his victory. For this pretended offence, they gathered themselves together against Jephthah, and threatened to burn his house upon him with fire.

“And Jephthah said unto them, I and my people were at great strife with the children of Ammon; and, when I called you, ye delivered me not out of their hands. And when I saw that ye delivered me not, I put my life in my hands, and passed over against the children of

Ammon, and the Lord delivered them into my hand: wherefore then are ye come up unto me this day, to fight against me?"

"Then Jephthah gathered together all the men of Gilead, and fought with Ephraim: and the men of Gilead smote Ephraim, because they said, ye Gileadites are fugitives of Ephraim among the Ephraimites, and among the Manassites."

"And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth; and he said, Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of the Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand."

The word Shibboleth signifies "a stream of water," an expression naturally called for by the circumstances, and the repetition of which would excite no suspicion. The detecting a tribe by a peculiar mode of pronunciation, shows that distinct dialects were already spoken in different parts of the country, in the same manner as in ancient Greece and Italy, and in almost every country in Europe at the present day.

Jephthah judged Israel during six years, until his death.

After the death of Jephthah, the following

Judges are enumerated, of whom nothing memorable is recorded.

Ibzan judged Israel seven years.

Elon judged Israel ten years.

Abdon judged Israel eight years.

The next succeeding judge is Samson, whose history will be given in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER VII.

**SAMSON'S RIDDLE. CARRIES AWAY THE GATES OF GAZA. SLAYS THE PHILISTINES. REVEALS THE SECRET OF HIS STRENGTH: HIS DEATH.**

THE next oppression to which the Israelites were subjected, in consequence of their falling again into idolatry, was under the Philistines; a warlike and fierce people inhabiting the southern coast of Canaan, adjoining the tribes of Simeon and Dan. It is observed in the history of the Jews, by the Rev. H. Milman, that the yoke of foreign invaders under which the Israelites had hitherto groaned, however severe and debasing whilst it lasted, was not of long duration; and when once thrown off, the invaders withdrew entirely from the country. But it was not so with the Philistines. They possessed strong fenced cities, Gaza, Askelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Gath, close upon the borders of the tribes, indeed



within the territory marked out for their possession; and hither, when defeated in the field, the Philistines retired, and could thus wait in security for a favorable occasion to renew their inroads, and harass the Israelites. In the time of Samson, they appear to have made themselves masters of the whole of the territory belonging to Simeon, and were the oppressors and conquerors of all the southern part of Canaan. They were by far the most formidable enemies the Israelites ever contended with; being remarkable for personal strength, skill in war, and vindictive cruelty.\*

The Israelites had suffered during forty years the oppression of the Philistines, when a deliverer was foretold to Manoah, an Israelite of the tribe of Dan. An Angel of the Lord appeared to his wife, and afterwards to himself, and announced that they should have a son, who should "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." They were commanded to bring him up a Nazarite; that is, according to the manner prescribed by Moses to be observed by persons separated from the rest of the people for purposes of devotion, or the fulfilling of a vow. These Nazarites wore their hair long: no razor was to come upon their head; and they drank no strong drink nor even ate of the fruit of the vine.† In this remarkable manner the

\* It is supposed by some that the "Shepherd kings," so famous in Egyptian history for their cruelty, were Philistines.

† See Numbers vi. 2. "When either man or woman shall

child of Manoah was to be prepared for his great work ; and, unlike the vow of the Nazarite which lasted only for a certain time, the discipline was to continue through the whole of his life.

The child was named Samson ; and he was brought up by his parents in exact conformity with the command they had received : his hair remained long, he drank neither wine nor strong drink, and was as a Nazarite. He was endued with miraculous strength from God ; a strength which he was to exert for the protection of his nation, and the subjugation of the Philistines ; but it was left to himself to choose the manner in which he used this extraordinary power ; and we shall find that personal revenge and impetuous passion too often guided him, rather than a wise and just resistance to an idolatrous servitude. The first account which we read of Samson, relates the history of his seeking a wife from the Philistines, and the dissension which ensued.

“ And Samson went down to Timnath, and saw a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines. And he came up and told his father

“ separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate  
“ themselves unto the LORD : He shall separate himself from  
“ wine and strong drink, or vinegar of strong drink, neither  
“ shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes nor  
“ dried. All the days of his separation shall he eat nothing that  
“ is made of the vine-tree, from the kernels even to the husk.  
“ All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor  
“ come upon his head : until the days be fulfilled in the which  
“ he separated himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and  
“ shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow,”

and his mother, and said, I have seen a woman in Timnath of the daughters of the Philistines : now therefore get her for me to wife."

The parents of Samson were strongly averse to his taking a wife from the idolatrous Philistines : but Samson insisted upon having the woman he had seen ; and Manoah and his wife at length consented to go down, and demand her in marriage for their son.

"Then went Samson down, and his father and mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyards of Timnath : and behold a young lion roared against him. And the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand : but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. And he went down and talked with the woman ; and she pleased Samson well."

"And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcase of the lion ; and behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcase of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and his mother, and he gave them and they did eat ; but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcase of the lion."

"So his father went down to the woman ; and Samson made there a feast ; for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him."

“And Samson said unto them, I will now put forth a riddle unto you ; if ye can certainly declare it me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then will I give you thirty sheets, and thirty change of garments. But if ye cannot declare it me, then shall ye give me thirty sheets and thirty change of garments. And they said unto him, put forth thy riddle, that we may hear it.”

“And he said unto them : Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.”

“And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they said unto Samson’s wife, Entice thy husband that he may declare unto us the riddle ; lest we burn thee and thy father’s house with fire. Have ye called us to take that we have ? Is it not so ?”

“And Samson’s wife wept before him, and said, Thou dost but hate me and lovest me not : thou hast put forth a riddle unto the children of my people, and hast not told it me. And he said unto her, Behold, I have not told it my father nor my mother, and shall I tell it thee ? And she wept before him the seven days, while their feast lasted : and it came to pass on the seventh day, that he told her, because she lay sore upon him. And she told the riddle to the children of her people.”

“And the men of the city said unto him on the seventh day before the sun went down ;

What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?"

Samson knew that the secret of his riddle had been discovered by means of his wife, and reproached the Philistines with not being able to guess it: he, nevertheless, had to pay the forfeit-price agreed upon; and to do this, and at the same time to avenge himself upon this hostile nation, he went down to Askelon, a strong city of the Philistines, lying on the sea coast considerably to the south of Timnath, and there slew thirty men, and took their spoil, and thus gave change of garments to them which expounded the riddle. "And his anger was kindled, and he went up to his father's house," leaving his wife with her own kindred.

Some time after, when his anger was abated, Samson went again to Timnath, and demanded his wife: but her father refused to give her to him. Enraged at this treatment, he took a cruel method of revenge. He caught three hundred foxes,\* and fastened them two and two together, and put firebrands between them, and then "let them go into the standing corn of the Philistines, and burnt up both the shocks, and also the standing corn, with the vineyards and olives."

The Philistines revenged this injury upon the wife of Samson, and her father: 'they burnt her and her father with fire,' and thus terribly

\* '*Foxes*.'—Now supposed to be more correctly rendered, '*Jackals*,' an animal abounding in Judea, living in holes in the mountains.

executed the threat which they had before used to terrify her to betray her husband : so seldom is it that a base compliance with a wicked command saves the coward from destruction ! Whether the Philistines did this in anger, or to propitiate Samson, seems uncertain ; in either case, Samson continued to attack them, and smote them with a great slaughter : he then went and dwelt in mount Etam, in the tribe of Judah.

If the conduct of Samson be regarded simply as that of a common individual, living in common times, there appears in it only the savage character of a wild and barbarous age, when an insult or injury was held to be a justifiable cause for indiscriminate revenge and slaughter. But there is another view in which this and other parts of his conduct, will appear in a different light. He knew himself to be endued with miraculous strength, in order that he might deliver his countrymen from the oppressive yoke of the Philistines ; but the spirit of the Israelites appears to have been completely broken, and they viewed with dread and slavish terror, rather than with joy, the prospect of an open resistance to their terrible oppressors. We shall see that they blamed Samson for bringing upon them the indignation of the Philistines, and were even willing to deliver him up a prisoner into their hands. In such circumstances, he appears to have avoided attacking the Philistines on the ground of their tyranny over his country,

as, by so doing, he would have involved the Israelites generally in the consequences of his attack, whether it were successful, or unsuccessful: but he made occasion of quarrel, whenever opportunity served, in their conduct towards himself; and thus he executed his purpose of destroying the power of these warlike enemies, whilst he appeared to be merely following the blind impulse of personal revenge. In this manner the people escaped the fury of the Philistines; while Samson, secure in his miraculous strength, set their power openly at defiance.

On Samson's removing to the rock Etam, after the slaughter of the Philistines, this warlike nation assembled their forces, and came to Lehi, in the tribe of Judah, near to the spot where Samson had taken refuge. "And the men of Judah said, why are ye come up against us? And they answered, To bind Samson are we come up, to do to him as he hath done to us. Then three thousand men of Judah went to the top of the rock Etam, and said to Samson, Knowest thou not that the Philistines rule over us?"

"And he said unto them, As they did unto me, so have I done unto them."

"And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hand of the Philistines. And Samson said unto them, Swear unto me, that ye will not fall upon me yourselves."

"And they spoke unto him, saying, No: but

we will bind thee fast, and deliver thee into their hand; but surely we will not kill thee. And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him up from the rock."

"And when he came to Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand, and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith. And Samson said, With the jaw-bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw-bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men. And it came to pass when he had made an end of speaking that he cast away the jaw-bone out of his hand, and called that place Ramath-lehi."

Being overcome with thirst after the fearful combat, Samson prayed to God for relief, who caused water to gush out of a rock, of which he drank, when his spirit and strength returned, and he revived.\*

The next instance recorded of Samson's strength is the carrying away the Gates of

\* In the common version the water is said to come out of "the jaw:" but this is stated by Dr. Hales and all modern commentators to be an erroneous translation. *Lehi* means "the jaw-bone" in Hebrew; the place being so called by Samson in commemoration of his victory, and the instrument by which he achieved it: but it is the place, Lehi, and not the jaw-bone, from which the water came; and in the latter part of the verse the same word is so rendered.



Gaza, a strong town belonging to the Philistines. When the inhabitants heard that he was in their city, they shut the gates, and were quiet all the night, saying, "In the morning, when it is day, we shall kill him." "But Samson went at midnight, and took the gates, and the two posts, and went away with them, bar and all, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them to the top of an hill that is before Hebron." So impossible was it to oppose his strength by any human obstacles.

At length, however, the strength which Samson could not be deprived of by the power of his enemies, was lost by his disobeying the Divine command, and revealing the secret of the vow on the observance of which, probably as a trial of his faith, his miraculous might depended. He loved Delilah, a woman who lived in the valley of Sorek. To her the lords of the Philistines came, and offered her a high bribe if she would entice Samson to disclose to her the secret in which his strength lay, and reveal it to them. To this treacherous proposal she consented.

"And Delilah said to Samson, Tell me, I pray thee, wherein thy great strength lieth, and wherewith thou mightest be bound to afflict thee."

"And Samson said unto her, If they bind me with seven green withs that were never dried, then shall I be weak, and be as another man."

"Then the lords of the Philistines brought up to her seven green withs which had not been

dried, and she bound him with them. Now there were men lying in wait, abiding with her in the chamber. And she said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee Samson. And he broke the withs as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. So his strength was not known."

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Behold thou hast mocked me, and told me lies: now tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, if they bind me fast with new ropes that never were occupied, then shall I be weak, and be as another man."

"Delilah therefore took new ropes, and bound him therewith, and said unto him, The Philistines be upon thee, Samson. And there were liers in wait abiding in the chamber. And he brake them from off his arm like a thread."

"And Delilah said unto Samson, Hitherto thou hast mocked me and told me lies: tell me wherewith thou mightest be bound. And he said unto her, If thou weavest the seven locks of my head with the web. And she fastened it with the pin, and said unto him, the Philistines be upon thee, Samson; and he awaked out of his sleep, and went away with the pin of the beam, and the web."

"And she said unto him, How canst thou say I love thee, when thine heart is not with me? thou hast mocked me these three times, and hast not told me wherein thy great strength lieth. And it came to pass when she pressed him daily

with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death ; that he told her all his heart, and said unto her, There hath not come a razor upon my head ; for I have been a Nazarite unto God from my birth : if I be shaven, then my strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man. And when Delilah saw that he had told her all his heart, she sent and called for the lords of the Philistines, saying, come up this once, for he hath shewed me all his heart. Then the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and brought money in their hand."

This time Samson had truly revealed the secret of his miraculous power : and when Delilah, during his sleep, caused a man to cut off his hair and beard, his great might departed from him, and he became weak as another man. The Philistines fell upon him ; and though he went out against them as at other times, not knowing at first that his strength had left him, he was quickly overcome and taken, for "the LORD had departed from him."

Then "the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass : and he did grind in the prison house."

"Howbeit the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

"Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice : for they said,

Our god hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us. And it came to pass when their hearts were merry, that they said, Call for Samson, that he may make us sport. And they called for Samson out of the prison house; and he made them sport: and they set him between the pillars."

"And Samson said unto the lad that held him by the hand, Suffer me that I may feel the pillars whereupon the house standeth, that I may lean upon them."

"Now the house was full of men and women: and all the lords of the Philistines were there; and there were upon the roof about three thousand men and women, that beheld while Samson made sport."

"And Samson called unto the LORD, and said, O LORD God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes."

"And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood, and on which it was borne up, of the one with his right hand, and of the other with his left. And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

"Then his brethren, and all the house of his father came down, and took him, and brought him up, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol, in the burying place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years."

Samson was the last of the Judges, properly so called. Before proceeding with the historical narrative, we shall give a short account of the Book of Ruth; a beautiful and touching story, the events of which occurred during this period, probably in the time of Gideon.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE STORY OF RUTH.

"Now it came to pass in the days when the Judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon, and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there."

As famines and other public calamities which afflicted the Israelites were, at this period of their history, never sent but as chastisements

for national sins, it seems to argue a want of submissive reverence to the Divine will to endeavour to avoid them. If this famine were sent to punish sin, particularly the sin of idolatry, according to the prophetic warnings of the Law of Moses, Elimelech was guilty of want of faith and obedience in seeking to escape it, by leaving his country: and this view appears to be confirmed by the afflictions which befel himself and family when they were, as they thought, in safety in a foreign land. What would be perfectly justifiable in our own age and country, was not so to an Israelite, whose earthly governor was the Almighty; in whose hand are the issues of life, and who made the seasons the ministers of his all wise dispensations.

“And Elimelech, Naomi’s husband, died; and she was left and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband.”

“Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah.”

"And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house; the LORD deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me."

To this disinterested remonstrance of the aged Naomi, both the daughters-in-law at first refused to listen; Orpah, however, soon yielded, and, taking an affectionate leave of her mother-in-law, returned to her family, and remained in Moab; but Ruth persisted in her generous self-sacrifice, and no persuasion could induce her to desert the desolate Naomi. "Intreat me not to leave thee," she said, "or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me."

"When Naomi saw that Ruth was steadfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking to her."

"So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi, And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara:\* for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified

\* Naomi signifies *pleasant*; and Mara, or Marah, *bitter*.

against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me."

"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law, which returned out of the country of Moab; and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.

"And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter. And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech." To glean in the field, was a privilege expressly granted the poor by the humane law of Moses. Nor were the rich to reap their fields too strictly, if they would procure a blessing upon their produce. The practice of gleaning in the field after the reapers, was however not a right, but a privilege, only conceded to those who were favored in a more especial manner.

"And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, the LORD bless thee."

"Then said Boaz unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this? And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel



that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab : and she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves ; so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house."

"Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter ? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens. Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them : and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

"Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldst take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger."

"And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law, since the death of thine husband : and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust."

"Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord ; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine

handmaidens. And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers; and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left. And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not; and let fall also some handfuls on purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not. So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned; and it was about an ephah of barley."

When Ruth returned, and related to Naomi the favor which Boaz had shown her, Naomi rejoiced; for Boaz was a near kinsman of her husband, and the most fitting person, according to the Hebrew customs, to show them kindness and protection. She desired her daughter-in-law to do in every thing as Boaz had commanded; to keep with his people, and not to be seen in the field of any other person, which Ruth did, and continued thus to glean in the fields of Boaz, until the end of the barley and wheat harvest.

When the harvest was over, Naomi, who was strongly attached to her devoted and generous daughter-in-law, resolved to avail herself of a law of Moses (which ordained that if a man died without leaving children, his next of kin should marry his widow), to procure a safe and honor-

## 1ST SAMUEL.\*

## CHAPTER IX.

SAMUEL CALLED. ILL CONDUCT OF ELI'S SONS.  
THE ARK TAKEN BY THE PHILISTINES. ELI  
DIES.

ELKANAH and his wife Hannah, of the tribe of Ephraim, were good and devout Israelites; and they went yearly up to Shiloh, where was the Tabernacle of the LORD, to offer sacrifice, and to worship. Now Hannah had no child, and was unhappy on this account: and when she went to offer her prayers to God, she wept before him, and prayed earnestly that He would grant her a child.

As she was thus weeping, and making her earnest supplication to that great Being, who has mercifully commanded his faithful children

\* The First Book of Samuel, supposed to be written principally by the Prophet Samuel, takes up a period of about eighty years. It contains the history of Eli's high-priesthood, of Samuel's administration, of the anointing of Saul to be king, and of the whole of his reign; the last chapter giving the account of his death. Consequently, this book relates the early part of David's life, and all his achievements and escapes during the reign of Saul. Samuel is believed to have collected and arranged the earlier Books of the Old Testament; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

to make their requests and petitions known unto him, her lips moved in the earnestness of her prayer; but she uttered no sound, speaking to herself. Eli, the high Priest, was near, and, observing her unusual behaviour, thought she had been drunken, and reproved her. But "Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial, (or a wicked woman): for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto."

"Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition, that thou hast asked of him."

"And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

Hannah's earnest prayer was granted, and she was blessed with a son, whom she called Samuel. And as she had made a vow that, if she had a son, she would dedicate him to the service of the LORD, she took the child up with her to Shiloh. Here he was received by Eli, and clothed with the linen ephod, or priest's garment, and employed in the service of the Tabernacle. "And the child Samuel grew before the LORD."

It was early manifested to the people, that the child thus devoted to the service of God from his infancy, was to be endowed with the pro-

called the child. Therefore Eli said unto the child, Go, lie down again; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place."

"And the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth."

"And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every man that heareth it shall tingle. In that day will I perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be cleansed with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

"And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD. And Samuel feared to show Eli the vision."

"Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel, my son, and he answered, Here am I."

"And he said, what is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee and more also if thou hide anything from me of all the things that He said unto thee."

"And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And Eli said, It is the LORD; let him do what seemeth him good."

Even this last solemn warning appears to have produced no change in Eli's conduct to his sons; and it affords a striking example of the difficulty, not to say impossibility, which men experience, in altering habits of long standing, when arrived at advanced age. Yet though unwilling, or perhaps unable, then to check the wickedness of his children, he received the announcement of his punishment with pious submission; the more to be estimated when we recollect the hope which every parent in Israel nourished, that the promised Messiah might in future ages spring from his descendants.

While the fearful doom of Eli's family awaited the full time for its accomplishment, the Prophetic mission was given to the youthful Samuel; "and all Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD."

During this time, the Israelites were sorely oppressed by the Philistines, the most warlike, and apparently the most cruel of all their conquerors. They endeavoured by their own efforts to throw off the yoke; and, assembling an army, they came to battle with the enemy at Eben-ezer, but were totally defeated: four thousand of the Israelites were slain. Instead of enquiring of the LORD through his chosen prophet Samuel for direction, and humbling themselves beneath

his chastening hand, the people impiously resolved to force, as they vainly imagined, the victory to be given them, by carrying into battle the Sacred Ark, the symbol of the Divine presence.

The Ark, then at Shiloh, was accordingly sent for to the camp; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, far from resisting the profanation, accompanied it, and encouraged the people by their example. The next day, carrying the sacred Ark in the midst, the Israelites went out again to meet the Philistines, and, far from the victory they had madly expected to obtain by such means, they sustained a complete and disastrous defeat. Hophni and Phinehas, with thirty thousand men, were slain, and the Ark of God was taken.

“And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army and came to Shiloh the same day, with his clothes rent and with earth upon his head. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the wayside watching: for his heart trembled for the Ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What meaneth the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old; and his eyes were dim, that he could not see.”

“And the man said unto Eli, I am he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And Eli said, what is there done,

my son? And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the Ark of God is taken."

"And it came to pass, when he made mention of the Ark of God, that Eli fell from off the seat backwards, by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man and heavy: and he had judged Israel forty years."

Thus died Eli; a memorable example to parents, who are satisfied with being themselves religious, humble minded, and submissive to the Divine will, and neglect to enforce these duties upon the minds of their children.

When the Philistines took the Ark, they carried it in triumph to Ashdod, one of their principal cities, and placed it in the temple of their god Dagon.\* This idol was a monstrous figure, having the head, and hands, and feet of a woman, and the body of a fish.

"And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon and set him in his place again.

\* It is not certain which of the ancient Heathen gods Dagon represented. Some suppose him to be the same as Jupiter, others Saturn, and others again the goddess Venus, or else Ceres. See article *Dagon*, in *Calmet's dict. of the Bible*: also, *Jahn's Biblical Antiquities*.



And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the Ark of the LORD: and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon of Ashdod unto this day."

In addition to this humiliating destruction of their supposed god, the inhabitants of Ashdod were visited by a pestilence which attacked great numbers; so that they sent to the lords of the Philistines to desire that the Ark might be removed, "for the hand of the God of Israel is sore upon us and upon our god." Their demand was complied with, and the Ark was carried to Gath: but thither pestilence and death followed it; and the people rose, and sent the Ark away to Ekron. But terror preceded it here also; and the inhabitants of Ekron cried out, that they had brought the Ark of the God of Israel to slay them and their children. In this manner the Ark was sent from city to city, during seven months; pestilence and death every where followed it, until the Philistines, reminding each other of the judgments which had fallen upon the Egyptians for detaining the chosen people of God, resolved not to harden their hearts, as Pharaoh and his people had done, but to send back the Ark with honor, accompanied with presents and offerings, to appease the anger they

had incurred. To place beyond all doubt the real cause of the evils which had befallen them, the priests and diviners who were consulted, desired the people to place the Ark upon a new cart, and to take two milch kine upon which there had come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart, and bring their calves home from them :” then, if the kine, contrary to their natural instinct, left their calves, and proceeded with the Ark without guidance along the coast to the nearest city of the Israelites, the people would be convinced that they had been smitten by the hand of God ; but, if not, they might suppose the pestilence had been accidental : “ a chance that happened to them.” This was accordingly done : the kine were fastened to the cart, and instantly took the straight way to Beth-shemesh, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left : and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh.

“ And they of Beth-shemesh were reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley ; and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the Ark, and rejoiced to see it. And the cart came into the field of Joshua a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where there was a great stone : and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the Lord. And the Levites took down the Ark of the Lord, and the coffer that was with it, wherein the jewels of gold

320 THE ARK REMOVED FROM BETH-SHEMESH.

were, and put them on the great stone ; and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices, the same day, unto the LORD. And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day."

Whilst the Ark remained at Beth-shemesh, the people, contaminated by the practice of idolatry, to which they had addicted themselves, would have lost their reverence for this sacred symbol of their Creator's presence, but for a memorable and awful example: disregarding the law which forbid all but the Levites to approach the Ark of the Covenant, the people crowded round, and examined it with profane and irreverent curiosity; a pestilence immediately followed, and warned them that their God was not like an impotent idol of wood and stone, but an unseen Spirit of infinite knowledge and power, whose commands could not be disobeyed without suffering, and whose favour must be gained by a reverential obedience to his will. Terrified at the awful punishment they had incurred, the people of Beth-shemesh sent messengers to the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, praying them to fetch away the Ark, which they accordingly did, and conveyed it to the house of Abinadab, a priest, whose son Eleazer, was sanctified, in order to take charge of it: here it remained during twenty years, until removed to Jerusalem by David.

Eli, the High-priest, being dead, Samuel, whose prophetic mission had for many years been fully known and acknowledged, became the Judge of the Israelitish nation; and all the people looked up to him for guidance. He solemnly exhorted them to put away the strange gods of the nations round, and return with their whole hearts to Jehovah, as the sure and only means of obtaining His mercy and protection. The people, humbled and penitent, obeyed; "they did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only." Having given this proof of their sincerity and repentance, Samuel once more commanded them to assemble at Mizpeh; and there offering sacrifices, and humble petitions for forgiveness, he prayed God to favor once more his people, and deliver them from their oppressors. His prayer was answered: the Philistines hearing of the Israelites being collected together at Mizpeh, attacked them, but were themselves defeated with great slaughter. The victory was decisive: the Philistines were driven back into their remote fastnesses; the cities they had taken from the Israelites were restored, and the land enjoyed again the blessings of peace.

"Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. And his return was to Ramah, for there was his house; and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar unto the LORD."

## CHAPTER X.

SAMUEL ANOINTS SAUL. SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE;  
IS REJECTED IN CONSEQUENCE. DAVID  
ANOINTED.

DURING the administration of Samuel, the people of Israel enjoyed the blessings of a just and well-ordered government: they were prosperous at home, and were preserved from the power of their foreign enemies by the protection of the Supreme being, to whose pure worship they had returned. By the annual progress which he made through the country, Samuel watched over the interests of all classes of the people; and so impartially did he execute his high office of Judge, that when afterwards he resigned his charge to the king whom the nation demanded, he was enabled to challenge any individual to prove against him a single instance of corruption. Amongst the regulations which he introduced for the improvement and instruction of the people, was one entitled "the schools of the prophets;" which seem to have been established in the cities of the Levites for the purpose of instructing them in the laws, and the religious duties of their office, and in psalmody; here were educated the future priests, lawyers, and instructors of the nation; and from these seminaries David afterwards selected his various courses of Levites

ready for the solemn and splendid worship of the Temple. Thus did this great prophet devote his energies to the task of government, while in the vigor of his health and strength; but with declining years his exertions relaxed, and he sought to devolve the labor of his arduous duties upon his sons, whom he made judges over Israel in his stead. His sons were, however, unworthy of the high office: we are not informed that they committed the enormities which had brought down the judgment of God upon the sons of Eli; but they "took bribes, and perverted judgment, so that the people murmured, and the Elders came to Samuel at Ramah, and desired that he would give them a king, to judge them like other nations."

In making this request, the Israelites not only rejected the family of Samuel, but they rejected their Divine Governor, who had promised to be unto them for a king. And 'the thing displeased Samuel:' But when he prayed to God for direction as to what answer he should make to the people, he was commanded to comply with their demand; although, he was to put before them the consequences of their choice, and the manner in which an earthly king would reign over them. Accordingly, on the day appointed, Samuel, in a long address, set forth in strong language the burdens which a kingly government would impose upon them, the oppressions to which they would be subject, the services the king would exact, compelling even their sons and daughters

to perform the menial offices of his palace,—and the prophet ended by solemnly declaring that, in that day they should cry out because of the king which they had chosen, but the LORD would not hear them. Notwithstanding this forcible remonstrance and warning, the people persisted in desiring to have a king, “that they might be like other nations:” Samuel then prepared to choose one, in obedience to God’s command.

Saul, whose eventful history now commences, was the son of Kish, ‘a mighty man of power,’ of the tribe of Benjamin. He was remarkable for the beauty of his person, and the height of his stature, being a head and shoulders higher than any of the people; a circumstance much esteemed in that age, when personal prowess and strength were considered essential qualities in a king. The asses of his father being lost, Saul was sent to seek them, attended by a servant; and in the search they passed many days, but without success. At length, fearing that their prolonged absence would cause his father uneasiness, Saul proposed to return home, lest, he said, ‘My father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us.’ But the servant suggested that they should first go and enquire of the prophet Samuel. “Behold now, there is in the city, a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go.” As they ascended the hill to the city, they learned

that Samuel had arrived there for the purpose of offering a public sacrifice ; after which there was to be a feast, for such guests as were bidden. Proceeding onwards, they met the prophet going up to the place of sacrifice. Saul addressed him, not knowing who he was, and asked him to tell him where the Seer lived. To this Samuel, instructed beforehand that Saul was the future king, replied, " I am the Seer : go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to day ; and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. And as for thy asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found. And on whom is all the desire of Israel ? is it not on thee, and all thy father's house ? "

" And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel ? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin ? wherefore then speakest thou so to me ? "

" And Samuel took Saul and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place, among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. And the cook took up the shoulder and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul. And Samuel said, Behold that which is left ; set it before thee and eat : for unto



this time hath it been kept for thee, since I said, I have invited the people. So Saul did eat with Samuel that day.”\*

On the following morning, Samuel sent forward Saul’s servant, and then declared to Saul the high destiny which awaited him: he took a vial of oil, poured it on his head, and anointed him king over Israel. To give him confidence in this prediction, he farther informed him minutely of three circumstances which would occur to him on his journey home: “When thou art departed from me this day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel’s sepulchre, in the border of Benjamin, at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek, are found; and lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, what shall I do for my son? Then shalt thou go forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which

\* The setting apart the most esteemed portion of meat for a guest of high degree, or one whom it is wished to honor, was the custom in ancient times, and is still so in Persia, and Egypt. “Many dishes there were and very substantial, and all the best bits given us from sheer hospitality.” *Lord Nugent’s Lands Classical and Sacred*, vol. ii. 156. In the present case, Samuel showed his prophetic knowledge, by ordering the dish to be ready for Saul, before he had approached the city.

thou shalt receive of their hands. After that, thou shalt come to the hill of God,\* where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place,† with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe and a harp before them; and they shall prophesy: and the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be when these things be come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee: for God is with thee. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and behold, I will come down unto thee to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings; seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come unto thee, and show thee what thou shalt do."

"And it was so, that when Saul had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass

\* Hill of God—supposed by some commentators to be Geba, and to have been called so from having a school of prophets established there.

† When 'prophets' are thus mentioned, the term only implies that they were companies of priests, and teachers of religion, from amongst whom the greater prophets were generally chosen, though not always; as for example, the Prophet Amos. Neither did the prophets, as of course, foretel things to come, though such were the mission and privilege of some of them. They were entirely distinct from the priests and under the kings; a main object of their function was to moderate the regal sway, and to guard the monarchs from idolatry, and from other transgressions of God's Law.

that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him: and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them.\* And it came to pass, when all who knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, What is this that is come unto the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets? And when he had made an end of prophesying he came unto the high place."

"And Saul's uncle said unto him and to his servant, Whither went ye? And he said, to seek the asses, and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel. And Saul's uncle said, Tell me I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you. And Saul said unto his uncle, He told us plainly that the asses were found. But of the matter of the kingdom, whereof Samuel spoke, he told him not."

We gather from this account, and from other similar relations in the history of the kings of Israel, that the private anointing of an individual by a prophet, was not an inaugural ceremony, giving a right to the throne, but a prophetic intimation that the person so anointed would eventually become king: in this manner, Saul is prepared for his exaltation, although he returns immediately after to his usual home and occupa-

\* That is, Saul joined the company of priests in chaunting the service, or whatever religious exercise they were engaged in, without previous instruction, and in a devout spirit.

tions ; nor is he made king until chosen by lot, and solemnly called to the office by the people. David, we shall find, is anointed privately by Samuel in like manner ; he also does not assume the government until called to it by the public voice, after the death of Saul. The ceremony of anointing appears not to have been essential, and to have been only adopted in cases of disputed succession, or when a reigning dynasty was changed by Divine command.\*

“ And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD at Mizpeh, and said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you : and ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations ; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands.” After this solemn remonstrance, Samuel having drawn the lots, the tribe of Benjamin was taken ; and the families in the tribe of Benjamin being drawn, that of Matri was taken ; and out of the members of the family of Matri, Saul was taken ; but when the people sought him he could not at first be found, having hid himself. He was brought forth ; and when he stood among the

\* See *Jahn's Biblical antiquities* ; also an interesting note on that passage in the Pictorial Bible.

people he was higher than any of them from his shoulders and upwards. His extraordinary stature fitted him, in the eyes of the ignorant multitude, for the high office just conferred upon him; and they shouted and said, 'God save the King.' Samuel then dismissed the assembly, and Saul returned to Gibeah; no longer as a private individual, but accompanied by a band of men, who attached themselves to his person. Notwithstanding however his general acceptance, and the manifestation of divine power by which he had been selected, there remained some turbulent men who despised him, and brought him no presents, which, in that country, was the form of acknowledging the authority of a superior. Of this Saul wisely took no notice; and an opportunity soon occurred of nobly convincing them of their faults.

The city of Jabesh-gilead, a small town on the eastern side of the river Jordan, was besieged by Nahash, a cruel king of the Ammonites; who refused to grant the wretched inhabitants any other conditions of surrender, than that they should every one have his right eye thrust out, and thus be dispersed as a witness of his vengeance, and as a reproach upon all Israel. The unfortunate people, in despair at such cruel conditions, demanded seven days respite, in which to send messengers to their countrymen, and ask assistance, and to this Nahash consented; but if no relief arrived, the people were to give themselves up. When messengers with

these fearful tidings came to Gibeah, the people wept. "And behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field ; and Saul said, what aileth the people that they weep ? And they told him, the tidings of the men of Jabesh. And the Spirit of God came upon Saul, when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul, and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen. And the fear of the Lord fell on the people, and they came out with one consent." The army assembled by this terrific symbol, was led by Saul the following day against the enemy, whom he entirely defeated ; and thus saved the inhabitants of Jabesh from the horrible fate which awaited them. An act of magnanimity completed Saul's triumph. The people, delighted with the courage, and dazzled by the success of their new leader, eagerly demanded that the men who had dared to despise his authority, should be brought before Samuel and slain ; but Saul generously interposed, "There shall not a man be put to death this day ; for to-day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel." How different would have been Saul's history, had he preserved this virtuous disdain of personal revenge !

Saul, having thus established his fame as a warrior, Samuel commanded the people to come

up to Gilgal, to renew the kingdom. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal. In the midst of the rejoicings which accompanied the ceremony, Samuel made a last and touching appeal to their better feelings.

“And Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. And, now, behold the king walketh before you : and I am old and grayheaded ; and behold, my sons are with you : and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am : witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed, whose ox have I taken ? or whose ass have I taken ? or whom have I defrauded ? whom have I oppressed ? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes therewith ? and I will restore it you.”

“And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken aught of any man’s hand :”

“And Samuel said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness against you this day, that ye have not found aught in my hand.”

“And they answered, He is witness.”

Samuel then recapitulated the righteous acts of the LORD, which He had done ‘to them and to their fathers ;’ their deliverances, their sins, their repentance, and His repeated forgiveness : their last and greatest offence they had now

committed in desiring a king; and to confirm his reproof, he called for thunder and lightening from heaven, to attest the authority by which he spoke. A storm followed, although it was the time of harvest, when rain was never known to fall; and the people conscience-stricken, greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

"And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

"And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness; yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD, with all your heart: And turn ye not aside: for then should ye go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he has done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall still be consumed, both ye and your king."

Thus were the people again promised pardon, and the protecting care of the Divine Being, if they abstained from idolatry, and obeyed the commands of His prophets. Yet were these



commands almost immediately disregarded by their newly chosen king.

Saul commenced his reign with making vigorous preparations for war against the neighbouring idolatrous nation. He, and his son Jonathan, had each their selected band of warriors; and, while they disciplined them for the field, they dismissed the rest of the tribes to their homes, to carry on their usual occupations, except when called upon to assemble for any important enterprize. Thus tranquilly passed two years: at the end of that time, Jonathan, having smote a Philistine garrison at Geba, the whole Philistine nation prepared to revenge the insult; and with a mighty force, 'people as the sand which is on the sea shore in multitude,' pitched their camp at Michmash; a town commanding a narrow defile to the north of Jerusalem. Saul summoned the tribes to Gilgal, and there waited for the Prophet to come and offer the burnt offering, and assure them of the Divine blessing on their enterprize. But Samuel came not; and the people, terrified at the formidable host of the Philistines, began to disperse secretly, and hide themselves. Had Saul trusted, as he ought, in the power of God, this would have been indifferent to him: with the example of Gideon before him, he knew that the most signal victories had been obtained with the smallest human means, and that, in fact, it was not the valor of his soldiers, (for they could never compare with the warlike Philistines,) but the power of

Jehovah which would give the victory. But Saul wanted this faith: impatient at the delay, he commanded the sacrifice to be performed, and scarcely was it over, when Samuel appeared. Saul went out to meet him; but the prophet sternly rebuked him for his disobedience, in that he had not kept the commandment of the LORD; and further declared, that the royal dignity which he had thus shown himself unworthy to hold, should not continue in his house. "But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD has sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee."

It is evident that Samuel's coming was purposely delayed, to try Saul's faith: and it is also but too evident, from this first act of direct disregard to a Divine injunction, to the last scene of his life, that Saul never felt, and therefore could never have led his people to feel reliance on God. Yet the object of their miraculous dispensation was to give this favored people, and through them the whole world, this trusting faith: to conquer the Philistines might answer Saul's shortsighted views, and free the Israelites from a cruel yoke; but to conquer them by inadequate means, and in a manner which attested the presence of a Power greater than man's, was a higher object, and was to declare a truth by which the whole world was to be blessed. Of this spirit of self-reliance in

Saul, in opposition to the divine will, we shall soon have another signal example; meanwhile, the discomfiture of the Philistines was accomplished by a far inferior means, as the world regards it, than a diminished army.

Jonathan, the eldest son of Saul, who to his father's courage in war, joined a devout reliance on the God of Israel, quitted the camp, and attended only by his armour-bearer, went to examine the garrison of the Philistines: "It may be," he said, "that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few." "And his armour-bearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee, behold, I am with thee according to thy heart." Then said Jonathan, "Behold we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. If they say unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up, for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this shall be a sign unto us." The sign which Jonathan asked for, was given: the men answered, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing," on hearing which, Jonathan and his armour-bearer climbed up the rock, and instantly falling upon the men that guarded it, slew them. A panic seized the Philistines, which was increased by an earthquake, that shook the ground under their feet, and, falling upon each other in their terror, a great slaughter

ensued. Meanwhile, Saul, in his camp, had commanded the priest Ahiah to bring the Ark, and ask concerning the course he should pursue: but before the priest had enquired of the LORD, the confusion in the camp of the Philistines was perceived by the Israelites; upon which Saul, with his usual impetuosity, forbade the priest to continue the sacred rites, and, abruptly quitting him, put himself at the head of his army, and joined in the pursuit of the Philistines. The victory of the Israelites was complete: but Saul's ungovernable passion and despotic caprice, had nearly proved fatal to their brave and dauntless leader.

In the beginning of the pursuit, he uttered a foolish and impious curse, upon any one who should taste food until the evening. Jonathan, not being in the camp, knew nothing of this his father's oath; and finding some honey- with which the woods abounded, he dipped the end of his rod into the honey-comb, and ate, and was refreshed. One of the people then told Jonathan of his father's oath: he was grieved and regretted that, by an imprudent and useless prohibition, the men were prevented having the refreshment, of which they stood much in need. Another sin was the consequence: utterly exhausted by the long combat, and having taken great quantities of sheep and oxen in the spoil, when evening came, the people waited not to prepare their food in the customary manner, but,

reckless from exhaustion, slew the beasts on the ground, 'and did eat them with the blood;' contrary to the express statutes of their law. When Saul heard of what they had done, he commanded every man to bring his ox or his sheep, which he offered as a sin offering to the LORD, and erected an altar on the place, for a memorial.

The following day, when the priests drew near to ask counsel of God, no answer was returned ; a sign that some secret sin, unacknowledged, and unatoned for by sacrifice, had been committed. On this, Saul called the people before him, and desired to know wherein the sin had been ; adding, " though it be Jonathan, my son, he shall surely die. But there was not a man among all the people that answered him." Lots were then cast between Saul and Jonathan on one side, and the people on the other, when Saul and Jonathan were taken ; then between Saul and his son, when the lot fell on Jonathan. Jonathan now confessed that he had tasted of some honey, when ignorant of his father's oath : but this defence did not save him from the impetuous anger of Saul, who would have instantly slain him, but for the people. " And the people said unto Saul, shall Jonathan die who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel ? God forbid : as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground, for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan that he died not."

This affords another instance of a rash and sinful oath bringing ill consequences to the utterer; and the whole circumstance is a striking proof that such oaths are displeasing to the Deity, and if made, should be withdrawn, rather than kept. The silence of the Oracle of God, was, as in the case of Achan before Jericho, to prove to the Israelites that no infringement of the Law, however secretly committed, was unknown to Jehovah; but Jonathan having sinned ignorantly, is permitted to escape unhurt, and afterwards becomes the companion and friend of God's chosen servant David; while the oath produces much evil to Saul, and so far from ensuring victory diminishes its completeness, by rendering the people too faint to carry on the pursuit.

Shortly after this signal defeat of the Philistines, Saul was commanded to lead his army against the Amalekites; a nation whose unprovoked attack upon the Israelites, on their peaceful march through the desert, has already been recorded. This was to be neither a war of defence, nor a war of conquest: it was expressly declared by Samuel to be for the purpose of Divine chastisement; and that this chastisement might deter by its example, it was to be unparalleled in severity; the victor was to take no captives, to spare no cattle, and retain no spoil. Every thing was to be destroyed. With these commands, given by a prophet of Jehovah, Saul set out on the expedition. It was entirely suc-

cessful: the Amalekites were driven to the borders of Egypt, and their king Agag was taken alive. The spoil was immense, and tempted both king and people to despise the express command they had so solemnly received respecting it; every thing that was 'vile and refuse' they destroyed, but reserved the best of the flocks, together with Agag, to adorn Saul's triumph.

On the return of Saul, Samuel went to meet him. "And Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD. I have performed the commandment of the LORD."

"And Samuel said, what meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears? and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

"And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed."

"Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on."

"And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then, didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst

fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD?"

Saul again offered the false excuse, that he had reserved the spoil only to serve as a sacrifice, when Samuel made this ever-memorable reply:—"Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams?" After reproaching Saul with his rebellion and stubbornness, the Prophet ended by pronouncing his rejection by God: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king."

Saul was struck with dismay at hearing these fatal words: but, instead of acknowledging his fault, he proffered another excuse, equally vain; saying that he feared the people, and had obeyed their voice, instead of the commands of God; he even entreated the prophet to assist at the sacrifice, but Samuel refused; and as he turned to go away, Saul "laid hold of the skirt of his mantle, and it rent."

In like manner, declared the Prophet, the LORD had that day rent the kingdom of Israel from Saul.

Then the king, repentant too late, acknowledged his sin, and again prayed Samuel to honor him once more before the people, and return and worship with him; Samuel consented; and when the sacrifice was ended, he commanded Agag, the king of the Amalekites, to be brought



forth, and slew him, saying : " As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women : " an expression which intimates, that Agag was remarkable, even in that savage age, for his cruelty and oppression.\*

This was the last time that Samuel held intercourse with Saul : " nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul," whom he had himself anointed the first king over the chosen people, and grieved, as a parent might have done, over his disobedience and rejection. Whilst sorrowing over Saul, Samuel received a command to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, the Bethlehemite, who was chosen by the LORD in the place of Saul. For this purpose, Samuel quitted Ramah, his usual residence, and went to Bethlehem, a small town in the tribe of Judah, where he called all the people together to offer a sacrifice, to avoid the anger of Saul, whose ungoverned passion would have been roused, had he heard that Samuel purposed to anoint another king. Jesse and his sons assisted at it, and, when it was over, and before beginning the feast which followed it, Samuel desired to have the sons of Jesse presented to him. They appeared in succession ; and when Samuel saw Eliab, the eldest, who

\* According to Jahn, the Amalekites were the same nation as the Canaanites, who were divided into three divisions : 1st., those that remained in Arabia, which they first peopled ; these are called Amalekites : 2nd., those that emigrated and settled in Canaan, and were called Canaanites ; and 3rd, those that went further north, and built Sidon, and were called Phœnicians.

was of a handsome countenance and fine stature, he said, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before me."

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

"Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, neither hath the LORD chosen this."

"Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, neither hath the LORD chosen this."

"Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these."

"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, send and fetch him; for we will not sit down till he come hither."

"And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from this day forward."

## CHAPTER XI.

DAVID'S COMBAT WITH GOLIATH. DAVID AND  
JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP. SAUL'S JEALOUSY.

IN tracing the early period of David's history, and contrasting it with that of Saul, when rejected by God, and deserted by His Spirit, we are struck by the obvious truth, that there is no difference in worldly circumstances which affects the happiness of man, like that produced by the prompting of a good or of an evil conscience. Saul, in the midst of victory, and on a throne, felt that he was deserted by that Divine Being whose authority he had despised ; and he became a prey to melancholy and despair, amounting at times to fits of frenzy, and temporary madness. This disease, called in the language of Scripture, 'an evil spirit,' either fell upon him as a direct punishment from God, or, as we know to be possible, and seems in this case highly probable, it arose from the agonies of remorse, and the unsatisfied, morbid, and agitated feelings of a soul defying the restraints of religion, yet unable to find peace without its divine sanction. David, on the contrary, sustained alone by the consciousness of Divine favor, endures hardship and persecution, and yet appears an object of envy to the desolate and unhappy king, who seeks his life. The one, with some great faults, preserved

a humble frame of mind, and always repented deeply of his errors; the other sinned without repentance, and sought relief from remorse in the indulgence of the fierce passions which had caused his misery. To return to the history: .

When the malady which afflicted Saul was strong upon him, music alone calmed his frenzy; and his servants persuaded him to allow them to seek David, whose skill in playing upon the harp was already celebrated. He was, accordingly, sent for, "and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer." "And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took a harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Then David returned to his father's house.\*

At this time the Philistines gathered their forces together, and came and encamped against Saul: the armies occupied the sides of two hills, having a valley between them. "And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a

\* The order of events in David's life, is by some commentators supposed to have been transposed here, and David's being sent for to play before Saul, to have been after his combat with Goliath, and subsequent favor and dismissal.

target of brass between his shoulders. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam ; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron ; and one bearing his shield went before him. And he stood and cried to the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array ? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul ? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants : but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day ; give me a man that we may fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid."

This challenge of the gigantic Philistine was repeated every morning, during forty days. Saul offered riches, and honors, and even his daughter in marriage to any Israelite who dare accept it, but in vain : none ventured to attempt the apparently unequal combat, and the army of Saul became daily more dispirited.

In the camp of the Israelites there were three of David's brethren. " And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren ; and carry these ten cheeses, unto the captain of their thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge."

David reached the camp just as the insulting challenge of Goliath was delivered, as usual, in front of the host: he saw the terror of the people with indignation, and exclaimed, "who is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" And the people answered him after this manner, saying, so shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

"And Eliab, his eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why comest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart: for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle. And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

"And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner. And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him."

"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him: thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine."

"And Saul said unto David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he is a man of war from his youth."

"And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a

bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, the LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine."

"And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee."

Then Saul arrayed David in his own armour; but as David trusted not in the strength of armour, to which he was moreover unaccustomed, he said, "I cannot go in these;" and he put the armour off, and chose five smooth stones of the brook, and putting them in his scrip, with his sling only in his hand, he drew near the formidable champion of the Philistines.

"And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David; and the man that bare the shield went before him."

"And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance."

"And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, come to me, and I

will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field."

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth: that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands."

"And it came to pass, when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran towards the army to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled." The complete rout of the forces of the Philistines fol-



lowed, David leading the Israelites to their pursuit: on his return he was presented by Abner to Saul, and from that time he became famous as the most successful of his captains; "he went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants."

"In addition to the favor of the people, David obtained at this period of his life the friendship of Jonathan, Saul's eldest son; a friendship remarkable for its singular disinterestedness, for its truth and warmth in an age when the fiercer passions of men were but too frequently predominant, and for its long unchanging continuance, amidst trials and mutual adversities which have rarely been equalled. In the beginning of their union, Jonathan, the son of a king, took as his bosom-friend a youth of humble birth, but noble by his deeds, and devoted to the service of his country and his God. When David's success attracted the envy, and implacable hatred of Saul, his son, conscious of its injustice, and regarding his friend as the chosen instrument of Jehovah, preserved his own sentiments of attachment towards him; yet without failing in his duty as a son, but doing good to both, by saving David from treachery, and Saul, (in as much as he could) from the remorse which must have followed, had that treachery been successful: And last of all, when the

royal dignity which he had been brought up to expect as his heritage, was doomed to depart from his father's house, and become the possession of that friend whom his notice had once honored, no selfish regret made him renounce the friendship he had sworn in his youth; though he died fighting in defence of his father's crown, which he knew he was never to possess.

The commencement of David's trials, followed close upon his triumph over the terrible champion of the Philistines.

David being placed in command by Saul, and sent out against the enemy, constantly returned victorious; so that when, according to the custom of those days, the women came out of the cities to meet the conqueror, singing and dancing "with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music," they said one to another, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." "And Saul was very wrath, and the saying displeased him: and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more, but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day forward."

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied\* in the midst of the house: and David played with his hand, as at other times; and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. And

\* *Prophesied*, that is appeared excited and disturbed, as prophets frequently were.

Saul cast the javelin ; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. And David avoided out of his presence twice. And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul."

The jealousy of Saul was farther increased by David's continued success against the Philistines. He again resolved upon his death : but this time, through the intercession of Jonathan, his anger was appeased, and they were reconciled ; and again, David "was in his presence as in times past." But the spirit of envy was only quelled for the moment. On war being renewed with the Philistines, and David once more defeating them with great slaughter, Saul's jealousy returned, and as David was playing before him, he, a second time cast a javelin at him : David narrowly escaped, and fled home. Hither the messengers of Saul followed to slay him in the morning ; but in the night, Michal, Saul's daughter, who had been married to David, "let David down through a window, and he went and fled and escaped. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goat's hair for a bolster and covered it with a cloth. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, He is sick. And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. And when the messengers were come, behold, an image was in the bed, with a pillow of goat's hair for a bolster."

David fled to the prophet Samuel, to whom he told all that Saul had done unto him. But the enmity of Saul pursued him even here: he dispatched messengers to seize him; but "when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise. And Saul sent messengers again a third time, and they prophesied also. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold, they be at Naioth in Ramah. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on, and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah." Arrived in presence of Samuel, instead of breathing revenge and death, Saul continued to prophesy before him all that day, and all that night. "Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?" So impossible is it for weak man to strive against God.

It may be necessary again to remind the reader that the verb 'to prophesy,' is used in Scripture in very different significations: in its highest sense, when said of the Prophets sent in the later times of the Hebrew Monarchy, it refers to the foretelling of future events; but in numberless other instances, as in the present chapter, it means only religious exercises, whether of exhortation,

or the singing devotional songs to the sound of musical instruments, which seems to have been the usual practice of the schools of the prophets established by Samuel, and from which David afterwards selected his singers for the service of the Tabernacle. It is also occasionally used to express any violent agitation, or excitement. The *prophetic*, must be carefully distinguished from the *sacerdotal* office.

David, deeply affected by the unfounded anger of Saul, and probably uncertain how far it was the effect of disease, and therefore temporary, resolved to consult Jonathan, and learn from him what treatment he was to expect. Accordingly he fled from Naioth, and came to Jonathan, to whom he said, "what have I done? what is my iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?" To this touching appeal Jonathan replied, by assuring David that his father had not formed any designs against his life, or he must have known of them, as his father concealed nothing from him. Finding however that this failed to reassure David, who argued that Jonathan's friendship for himself would prevent Saul from confiding in him on such an occasion, it was agreed that a trial should be made of Saul's real disposition towards David, on the following day; when, it being the feast of the new moon, it was customary for all the members of the royal family to dine with the king. David would not be there; and if his absence were remarked, Jonathan was to

feign an excuse, which Saul would accept, if kindly disposed towards him, but not if he sought his life. To convey intelligence of what occurred to David, it was finally settled, that Jonathan should go to a field near the cave in which David concealed himself, and shoot three arrows at a mark; and when the youth who attended him went to seek them, he should say to the lad, if there was no danger to David, 'the arrows are *on this side of thee*,' but on the contrary, if there were danger, he should say, 'the arrows are *beyond thee*,' and then David was to flee.

On the following day, which was the first of the feast, the absence of David was not remarked; but on the second day, Saul enquired for him, and on Jonathan's offering the false excuse, that he had been called away to offer a sacrifice with his family, Saul's anger arose: he reproached his son for his friendship with the man who, if suffered to live, would deprive him of his kingdom, and commanded David to be brought before him that he might put him to death. On Jonathan's remonstrating, and urging in David's justification that he had committed no crime, Saul's rage overpowered him, and he cast a javelin he had in his hand at his son, who arose and quitted the feast, in terror and indignation.

"And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out in the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him.

And he said unto his lad, Run, and find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, is not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his artillery\* unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city."

"And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place towards the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one upon another."

"And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city."

\* *Artillery*, instruments; here meaning the arrows.

## CHAPTER XII.

DAVID FLEEING FROM SAUL, EATS THE SHEW BREAD:  
FEIGNS MADNESS. ABIATHAR ESCAPES IN THE  
MASSACRE OF THE PRIESTS. DAVID SAVES SAUL'S  
LIFE IN THE CAVE AT ENGEDI.

DAVID, being convinced that the anger of Saul was not the effect of temporary disease, and that it was in vain to hope for safety in his dominions, resolved to take refuge for a while in a land of strangers, and chose the country of the Philistines; probably, because it was most removed from Saul's pursuit. On the way, he came to Nob, a city of the Levites, whose exact site is unknown, but which is supposed to have been not far distant from Jerusalem. Here, worn out with exhaustion and fatigue, he met Ahimelech the priest, carrying away from the Tabernacle the loaves of shew bread, preparatory to replacing them with others fresh baked. David demanded the loaves for himself and his followers; but the priest refused to give them, saying, That the bread under his hand was not common, but hallowed bread, which it was only lawful for the priests to eat. Notwithstanding this declaration, David persisted in his demand, and Ahimelech yielded; being justified in so doing by the pressing exigency of the circumstances. A striking proof that, even under the strict ritual



of the Mosaic law, its ceremonial observances were not to be adhered to, if they interfered with higher and more important duties: such was the case in this instance; since David and his men could not have continued their flight without sustenance, and if he had waited whilst it was prepared, the suspicions of Ahimelech which were already excited, would probably have led to his detention. It is to this infringement of the Law by their greatest monarch, that Our Lord refers the Jews when they complained of his disciples plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. "But\* he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred and they that were with him. How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?"

After receiving this needful refreshment, David, feigning to be entrusted with a secret enterprize by Saul, either to deceive Ahimelech and those present, or to prevent the High-priest being involved in his disgrace, if Saul should hear of his having assisted in his escape, demanded a weapon of defence, having in his haste fled without either sword or spear. The only weapon there was the sword of Goliath, which had been laid up in the Tabernacle. "And David said, there is none like that, give it me." Ahimelech then

\* Matt. xii. 3rd and 4th verses; also Luke vi. 3rd and 4th verses.

brought out the sword of Goliath, and presenting it to David, suffered him to depart in peace: but there was present one of the servants of Saul, named Doeg, an Edomite, who afterwards reported with evil exaggeration to his suspicious master, all that had occurred.

David, continuing his flight, came to Achish, king of Gath, one of the cities of the Philistines. Here he was recognized as their late most formidable enemy. "And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?"

On hearing these words, David was afraid; and in order that he might escape, he pretended madness, which he counterfeited so well, that on being brought before Achish, that king was angry with his servants for bringing a madman into his presence, and contemptuously dismissed him.

Escaped from this imminent peril, David took refuge in the cave of Adullam, whither his relations joined him; and hither flocked all who were in distress, and every one who was discontented, and he became a captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men.

His parents, who were probably in danger from the enmity of Saul, he placed under the protection of the king of Moab; and this is the last time which the history makes mention of

them: they either died a natural death shortly after, or, as the Jews consider, they were slain by this king.

Some time after these events, David, at the command of the prophet Gad, returned into the land of Judah. When Saul heard of his coming, his suspicious temper took alarm; and, with the injustice which always attends jealousy, he accused his son Jonathan and his own immediate followers, of plotting with David against his life. Bad passions foster bad passions in others: Doeg the Edomite seized the evil opportunity to turn Saul's suspicion upon the High-priest. He artfully related how Ahimelech had given David food, and the sword of Goliath; and added falsely, that he had enquired of God for him. The wicked suggestion succeeded but too well. Saul sent for Ahimelech and all his father's house, and reproached him with what he had done. It was in vain that Ahimelech replied, that he knew nothing of Saul's displeasure against David, but on the contrary believed David to be engaged on the king's business, and high in his regard, and that he had not enquired of the LORD for him: the jealous king would not be appeased; and addressing his attendants, he commanded them to "turn and slay the priests of the LORD." But the servants of the king would not put forth their hands to fall upon the priests of the LORD."

"And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou, and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite

turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day four-score and five persons that did wear a linen ephod."

"And one of the sons of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled to David. And Abiathar shewed David that Saul had slain the Lord's priests. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of thy father's house. Abide thou with me; fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard." Abiathar henceforth remained with David, in character of high-priest, while Saul appointed Zadok, of the family of Eleazer, to that office: thus were there two high-priests until the reign of Solomon, who deposed Abiathar, when the priesthood finally departed from the house of Eli, as had been predicted.

When Saul was informed that David was in the wilderness of Engedi, a desert and rocky district lying to the west of the Dead Sea, he came thither with his troops to take him: but before he had discovered his retreat, he chanced to retire into a cave to sleep during the heat of the day. It was so ordered that the cave he lay down in, was the one in which David and his followers had sheltered themselves from his pursuit; and thus he was alone and asleep in the power of the very man whom he accused of conspiring against his life. David made no use of his advantage, but to prove his innocence.

Approaching Saul softly, he cut off a part of his robe; but even for this his heart smote him. "The LORD forbid," he exclaimed, "that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD."

"But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself."

"And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee: and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD's anointed. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee: yet thou huntest my soul to take it. The LORD judge between thee and me, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hands shall not be upon thee. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked; but mine hand shall not be upon thee. After whom is the king of Israel come out?

after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.\* The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand."

"And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me; for as much as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? Wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house.

"And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home, but David and his men gat them up unto the hold."

\* *After a dead dog, &c., i. e.* Doth a king come in arms against so low and humble a person as myself? The strength of the comparison is increased if we recollect the contempt and even abhorrence felt in the East towards dogs, where they are seldom domesticated, and rarely objects of care, and even affection, as with us.

## CHAPTER XIII.

SAMUEL DIES. NABAL AND ABIGAIL. DAVID SPARES SAUL'S LIFE IN THE CAMP. SAUL CONSULTS THE WITCH OF ENDOR. DEATH OF SAUL AND JONATHAN.

“AND Samuel died : and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.”

Samuel was the first of a long succession of prophets, who continued to the time of the return of the Jews from the Captivity in Babylon, of whom Malachi was the last. The prophet Samuel introduced many wise regulations in the management of the internal affairs of the people, and established a more regular government than there had been under the Judges; going through the country at stated times to hear and adjudge causes, and forming schools for the Levites, to prepare them for their office of instructors and Priests. Besides these labors, he revised the Sacred Books, and continued the history of his people from the time of Moses : the early part of the First Book of Samuel is believed to have been his writing; and the whole of the account of David contained in both the Books of Samuel, was probably called after his name, from respect to his memory, and from the influence which

he had in the beginning of that great king's career.

After the mourning for the death of this great prophet was over, David departed into the wilderness of Paran. Whilst here, he protected the shepherds who tended the flocks of a rich man, named Nabal; and when the time for shearing came, he sent some of his followers to ask for a gift or present, such as it was usual in that age to give to those who rendered so essential a service. Nabal, however, being of a morose and avaricious temper, refused angrily to comply with David's demand, and added insult to his denial, saying, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away from their master." When this answer was brought to David, he hastily commanded four hundred of his men to arm themselves, and prepared to attack Nabal, and punish him for his churlishness. Terrible would have been the consequences, had not the servants of Nabal, on hearing of David's approach, and knowing well both his power and the justice of his demand, addressed themselves to Abigail, Nabal's gentle wife, and informed her of all that had occurred. She instantly commanded a present to be prepared; two hundred loaves, two bottles of wine, five sheep ready dressed, five measures of parched corn, a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred figs; these she laid on asses, and went to meet David. When she saw him coming, she alighted off her ass,



and, after acknowledging the churlish conduct of her husband, she prayed David to accept of the gift she had brought, adding with forcible truth, "And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causelessly, or that my lord hath avenged himself:" David's anger was at once subdued by this appeal to his better feelings: he received her presents, and bade her go in peace, for he had hearkened to her voice. "And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand."

A very short time after Nabal died, on which David took Abigail to be his wife.

Saul's jealousy of David returned, notwithstanding the proof which the latter had given in the cave of Engedi, of his innocence of any design against his sovereign's life. Having heard where David abode with his followers, he assembled an army and came against him, as against a formidable enemy. In the night, as Saul lay encamped on the hill of Hachilah, David, accompanied by Abishai, the brother of Joab, entered the king's camp unobserved, and advanced into the centre of it, where Saul lay asleep, with his spear stuck in the ground, at

his bolster.\* Abner, Saul's general, was lying near, asleep also.

"Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him a second time. And David said to Abishai, destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him; or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle, and perish. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the LORD's anointed: but I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster, and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked: for they were all asleep; because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them."

"Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off; a great space being between them. And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not, Abner? Then Abner answered, and said, Who art thou that criest to the king?"

\* The spear was in this age, an emblem of authority and command.

"And David said to Abner, Art thou not a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. This thing is not good that thou hast done. As the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master, the LORD's anointed. And now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water which was at his bolster."

"And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king."

"And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? David again urged the injustice of his thus being driven from his country, and Saul again relented: and he said, "I have sinned: return my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day." But David could place no reliance upon promises so often broken: he desired that some one might be sent to fetch away the king's spear; and then went back to his retreat, while Saul, humbled and touched for the moment, but not penitent, returned to his place.

David again found it necessary to leave Saul's dominions, where he was never safe from his jealous rage, and sudden attacks: in order to place himself completely out of his power, he sought shelter in the land of the Philistines,

whose king, Achish, received him gladly, and gave him the city of Ziklag to dwell in. Here he remained upwards of a year; the king showing him unusual marks of favor and confidence. At the end of this time, thinking that the aid of so valiant a warrior as David would be certain to render him victorious, Achish resolved to go up against the Israelites; between whom and the Philistines there was at no time peace; although the war often languished for want of power in either party to carry it on. But when Achish joined the other Princes of the Philistines, they refused to permit David to be taken to battle against his own countrymen, fearing lest he should betray them; for they reminded the king, that it was he of whom the people of Israel sang one to another, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." David was accordingly sent back; but, on his returning to Ziklag a new scene of horror presented itself. During his absence, a band of Amalekites had attacked the place, and, after burning it to the ground, had carried away captive all the men, women, and children that they found in it. David sent for Abiathar, and after consulting the sacred Urim, and receiving a favorable answer, set off immediately in their pursuit. Of the six hundred men whom he took with him, two hundred, faint and exhausted with fatigue, were obliged to stop at the brook Besor, while the rest continued the pursuit.

The Amalekites were overtaken, and after an engagement in which great numbers of them were slain, they were utterly routed, and the men, women and children rescued from their hands, together with all the spoil. On their return, the two hundred who had been forced to rest on the way, demanded their equal share in the spoil, which the others refused; but David decided that then and henceforth, all should share alike; those who staid behind to guard the women and the baggage, and those who went out to the battle. The expedition against the Amalekites was fortunate in happening at this time, as it prevented David from being involved in the war with Saul, and saved him from witnessing the disastrous fate of one, whom he never ceased to regard as his anointed king.

Saul, meanwhile, awaited in fear and perplexity the approach of the Philistines. In this state of mingled terror and remorse, with the dreadful consciousness that he was deserted by God, and had forfeited by his disobedience all claim to that protecting power which had, on former occasions, been his defence and shield, Saul had recourse to a fearful and wicked expedient to allay his terrors. The oracle of God was silent; and neither prophet nor priest could give an answer regarding his fate in the approaching conflict. "Then Saul said unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her and enquire of her." This was a person pretending to have the power

of raising up the beings of another world, to answer her interrogatories. Such pretenders have always found ready belief in ages of ignorance and superstition; and their deceptions were among the many forms of idolatry, which the Israelites were expressly forbidden to practise. In the early part of Saul's reign, he had driven these impostors from the land; and the punishment of death was denounced on all who were found guilty of their arts. But Saul had now sunk to that state of mental and moral degradation, in which the impious pretensions of wizards and witches were likely to be believed; and he resolved to consult a woman of this description, who lived at Endor. Accompanied by two of his attendants, and disguising himself, that his rank might not be recognized, Saul appeared before the woman, and desired her to cause Samuel the Prophet to appear before him. At first, she refused, alleging the severe laws of Saul himself against such practices; but on receiving his assurance that no harm should happen to her in consequence, she complied, and pretended to attempt what he required. Suddenly, to her indescribable terror, the Prophet Samuel appeared, "an old man, covered with a mantle;" and she instantly felt that the hand of God had guided the king of Israel to her, to receive by the very means he so impiously used to encourage himself, the confirmation of his worst fears.

Saul, stooping with his face to the ground,

demanded of Samuel, what he should do, and what would be his fate in the battle with the Philistines; the answer was, that the kingdom was taken from him, and given to David, because he had not obeyed the voice of the LORD; that the Israelites would be defeated by the Philistines, and himself slain. On hearing this sentence, Saul fell to the earth senseless: he was recovered with difficulty, and, after having eaten food, of which he was much in need, he departed the same night, and returned sorrowful to his camp.

The denunciation of the Prophet was soon accomplished. The Philistines fought with the Israelites on Mount Gilboa, when a dreadful slaughter ensued; and three sons of Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua, were slain in the heat of the battle. Saul fled wounded, and dreading to fall alive into the hands of the Philistines, he turned to his armourbearer, and commanded him to draw his sword and slay him: but the armourbearer refused; when Saul, taking the sword into his own hand, fell upon it, and died. When the armourbearer saw that his master was dead, he fell upon his sword, and died with him.

On the following day, when the Philistines, according to their barbarous custom, came to strip the slain, they found the bodies of Saul and his sons: with savage ferocity they cut off the head of Saul, stripped the body of its armour,

which they hung up as a trophy in the temple of Ashtaroath, and then fastened it with those of his sons, on hooks on the wall of Bethsan, a town situated on the Jordan, to the south of the Sea of Tiberias. When the People of Jabesh, (the city which Saul at the commencement of his reign so valiantly delivered from the Ammonites) heard of this savage insult to their deliverer, they rose up in the night, and came and took down the bodies of Saul and his sons, and bringing them to their own city, buried their remains with funeral rites. Thus perished the first of Israel's kings: a man who had shown himself utterly unworthy of the high office to which he had been raised. Perhaps his selection was to afford a useful lesson to a people, who desired to be governed like other nations, when they were privileged to call the God of heaven and earth their Lawgiver and Judge. Saul's character resembles closely that of the petty sovereigns of his age; vigorous and energetic, but fitful and uncertain; sometimes yielding to the unlawful and perverse wishes of the multitude, and at others ruling them with despotic and cruel sway; yielding to his passions until his mind became disordered, and with the weakness of inconsistent vice, repenting, and committing sin, as passion or remorse swayed him. Yet was he not perhaps a worse king than the kings of the nations round, such as the Israelites so earnestly desired; his sin was in being like them,



"Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

"Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."

"From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty,\* the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty."

"Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions."

"Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel."

"How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! Oh Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places."

"I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been to me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

"How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

\* These two clauses have the same meaning.

On the death of Saul, the tribe of Judah immediately acknowledged David for their king: he was solemnly anointed at Hebron, a city of considerable importance situated to the south of Jerusalem, and here he resided for seven years. Meanwhile, the other tribes took Ishbosheth, Saul's son, and made him their king: he was of a weak character, and owed his elevation to Abner, his father's general, who supported his authority and governed in his name. In this manner, the country remained divided between the adherents of the house of Saul and of David: but at length Ishbosheth having offended Abner, the latter resolved to go over to David, and cause him to be acknowledged king by the remaining tribes. For this purpose, having sounded them, and found them willing, he sent messengers to David, to treat of terms. He appears to have had no design to betray Ishbosheth, though he deserted him; nor was David of a character to enforce hard conditions on the family of Saul. He received Abner at Hebron with every mark of kindness and regard, made a feast in honor of him, and then dismissed him in peace. But a treacherous fate awaited him. Joab, the early friend and most renowned general of David, had conceived a deep hatred against Abner, on account of the death of his own brother Asahel, whom Abner had slain in battle: he was besides of an overbearing and jealous temper, and perhaps feared that if Abner were reconciled to

David, he would become his rival in the king's favor. He was absent when Abner came to Hebron, but returned shortly after his departure. On hearing of the confidence which David had shown to his enemy, his fierce passions burst all restraint; he reproached him with having suffered Abner to depart in peace, and declared his belief that he had come only for the artful purpose of gaining intelligence. Quitting the king's presence in anger, he secretly dispatched messengers to bring Abner back, under pretence of having something to say to him; and when he had taken him aside, he treacherously slew him while unsuspecting of danger.

The grief and indignation of David were extreme: but Joab was too powerful for him to punish, though he never forgot the crime. He could only order a public and magnificent funeral to honor the remains of the unfortunate Abner: he himself fasted and put on sackcloth, in token of his own sorrow; and thus he exonerated himself, in the eyes of the indignant people, from all share in Joab's treachery.

The death of Abner caused the destruction of Ishbosheth. Of too feeble a character to hold the reins of government amidst tumult and strife, his followers soon deserted him, and two of his captains formed a conspiracy against his life. They entered his chamber, as he slept at noon, killed him, and carried his head to David. David rewarded their cruel treachery as it deserved. "As the LORD liveth, who hath re-

deemed my soul out of all adversity, when one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead, thinking to have brought good tidings, I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: How much more when wicked men have slain a righteous person in his own house, upon his bed? shall I not therefore require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth?" saying this, he commanded the traitors to be put to death.

On the death of Ishbosheth, the eleven remaining tribes acknowledged David for their king. Soon after this increase of his power, David besieged and took Jerusalem; then little more than a strong fortress in the hands of the Jebusites.\* Hither he removed with his court, seven years and six months after he was first crowned at Hebron, and Jerusalem henceforth became the capital of all Judea.

This remarkable place, the most sacred and most deeply interesting city in the world, stood on three hills, Sion, Moriah, and Acra. Another hill, Bezetha, was enclosed at a much later period. Mount Sion, the highest of these hills, rose to the south; here stood the citadel, considered impregnable from its commanding

\* Jerusalem was variously denominated at different periods. It is supposed to be the Salem where Melchizadeck lived; a hundred years afterwards it was conquered by the Jebusites, who named it Jebus; this David joined to Salem, and called it Jebus-Salem, or, as it was pronounced, Jerusalem.

situation, where David erected a palace, and called it the City of David. It was separated by a deep valley from Mount Acra, or the lower city, which lay to the north, in the form of a crescent. On the east was Mount Moriah, where Abraham had come in faith to offer his son Isaac, where David bought the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, and on which the Temple of Solomon was built. The city underwent many changes under its different rulers. During the captivity of the Jews at Babylon, it lay desolate and in ruins : it was repeopled on their return under Zerubbabel, and its walls rebuilt by Nehemiah ; after which it gradually increased, and reached its widest extent and highest splendour under Herod, and thus remained until taken and destroyed by the Roman Emperor Titus. The present city stands on a part of the site of the ancient town.

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## CHAPTER XV.

DAVID FETCHETH THE ARK TO JERUSALEM : HIS  
KINDNESS TO MEPHIBOSHETH. URIAH THE  
HITTITE SLAIN.

No sooner was David established upon the throne of Israel, than his devout mind turned with gratitude to the Author of his prosperity.

The Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of the Divine Presence, was still at Kirjath-jearim, whither it had been carried by the Philistines; and he resolved to go in solemn procession and bring it to Jerusalem. Thirty thousand of the people assembled for this purpose; David put himself at their head, and with music and dancing, the usual mode of celebrating all the public festivals of the Israelites, went down to Kirjath-jearim, which was distant nine miles from Jerusalem. The Ark was placed on a new cart, and the procession commenced: but the sacred reverence due to the Tabernacle of the LORD, had been lost during the long cessation of national worship; and upon its arrival at the threshing floor of Nachon, Uzzah put forth his hand and took hold of it, because it was shaken by the oxen. Uzzah was instantly struck dead. Terrified at this mark of the Divine displeasure, David was afraid to proceed, and the Ark was deposited in the house of Obed-edom, a Levite, and there left. Three months afterwards, on hearing that the LORD had blessed Obed-edom and all his household, David once more prepared to bring up the Ark to Jerusalem. Yet greater solemnity was observed than on the former occasion: Priests and Levites attended, and offered sacrifices as the procession advanced; while David himself, dressed in a simple linen ephod, and divested of all outward marks of royalty, led the people, as they "brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the

sound of the trumpet." When the sacrifices were ended, David blessed the people, and dismissed them with presents.\*

When Michal, Saul's daughter, saw David thus mixing with the common multitude, and playing and dancing before the Ark with none of the distinctions of his high rank, she was offended at what, to her undevout and worldly spirit, appeared a degradation, and on David's returning to bless his household, she met him with scornful reproaches: he made this just reply. "It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. And I will be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants, (or common people) which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor." The pride, and want of devout gratitude shown by Michal, was punished by her being childless.

A beautiful Psalm of Praise, was composed and given by David to be sung by Asaph and the Levites, on occasion of the bringing up of the Ark to Jerusalem, (1st Chronicles xvi. 8—36) beginning, "Give thanks unto the LORD, call

\* Music and dancing were practised in the national festivals of the Israelites, and in their sacred worship. Usually, the princes and nobles engaged in this ceremony did not mingle in it with the common people, and this was the ground of Michal's reproach to David. In later times kings and great men appear to have been only spectators. *Jahn's Biblical Antiquities. Ward's edition.*

upon his name, make known his deeds among the people."

This Psalm appears to be the first of those which David composed for the service of the Altar, and gave to be sung by the Levites on solemn festivals. It was at this time that he established the regular bands of musicians at the head of whom was Asaph, whose name is prefixed to many of the Psalms, some of which he himself composed: these choirs, as they may be called, played on various instruments, and sang often in parts, answering to each other, sometimes taking up the same idea, and repeating it in different words, and again both bands uniting in a chorus of praise and thanksgiving. The Ceremonial ritual established by David was the same as Moses had enjoined at Sinai: the Levites came up to Jerusalem and served in courses, changing every week: the altar smoked with the morning and evening sacrifice; while the people were once more seen thronging the courts of the LORD, and bringing their offerings of penitence and thanksgiving.

But the heart of David was not satisfied with having brought up the Ark of the LORD to Jerusalem: he desired to build a temple fitted to receive it. Sending for the prophet Nathan, he said unto him, "Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD remaineth within curtains." The Prophet commended the king's desire; but the word of the LORD came to him in the night, and commanded



him to return to the king, and forbade him to build a temple to the LORD; because "he had been a man of war, and had shed blood. His son Solomon who should succeed him, would be a man of rest, (or peace) and he should build a house to the LORD, and the LORD would bless him, and establish the throne of his kingdom for ever." David, accordingly desisted, from his purpose; but as he increased in power and riches, he collected costly materials from every country, in readiness for the glorious temple which Solomon was destined to erect.

The union of all the tribes under the strong government of David, raised the Israelites to a high pitch of prosperity and power; and the change was soon felt by the neighbouring idolatrous nations. David defeated first the Philistines, afterwards the Moabites and Ammonites; also the Edomites, which last conquest opened the way to the Red Sea, and secured him a share in the trade of the East; a traffic which has enriched every nation that has possessed it, and which poured wealth and luxury over the whole kingdom of Judah. His victories over the Syrians extended his dominions to the Euphrates, and a league of mutual amity with Hiram, king of Tyre, gave him the command of the famous artificers of Tyre, who were renowned throughout all antiquity for their skill in every sort of cunning workmanship. In the midst of his prosperity, David remembered the house of Saul. He sent for Ziba, a faithful

servant of Saul's, and enquired of him whether any of the family of his master remained, to whom he might show kindness. Ziba replied that Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, was still living. Immediately David sent for him, and received him with affection; he restored to him all the inheritance of his father's, and admitted him to his own table, an honour reserved only for the sons and highest officers of the king. Mephibosheth being lame of his feet, and incapable of superintending his inheritance, the care of it was entrusted to Ziba.

There are few characters on which a long train of prosperity does not produce an injurious effect; and of this David's unfortunately affords an example. Power and success had flattered his passions, until he no longer sought to control them, even when their gratification was sinful: the occasion was as follows.

During the war against the Ammonites, whilst Joab commanded the troops, and laid siege to Rabbah, David, who remained at Jerusalem, saw and loved Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of his chief officers, at this time absent with the army. Unrestrained by law or virtue, he resolved to obtain Bathsheba, though it should cost the death of her husband. For this wicked purpose, David wrote to Joab, and commanded him to place Uriah in the foremost of the battle; and when he should thus be in the midst of the enemy, he bade him retire, and

leave Uriah to be slain. Joab obeyed this wicked order: he placed Uriah in the front of the assault, and then retiring, gave him and his party up to be killed by the men of the city, who sallied out upon them in great fury. To all but Joab and David, Uriah's death seemed the effect of accident. Immediately Joab sent a messenger to acquaint the king apparently with the loss the army had sustained; but he charged him, if the king showed anger at the destruction of his troops, to say that "Uriah the Hittite died also." The messenger obeyed; and David too well understood the import of the words: he returned an answer which marked his satisfaction at Joab's obedience to his wishes, but couched in ambiguous words, which the messenger understood not; and then made Bathsheba his wife. "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD."

"And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came and said unto him, There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor."

"The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished up; and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter."

"And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and

of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."

"And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man: and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die, And he shall restore the lamb four fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

"And Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah, and moreover if that had been too little, I would have given thee such and such things."

"Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon."

"Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife:"

David, struck with conviction, repented of the sin he had committed: the first child of Bathsheba died; and the troubles of his family which soon after broke out, yet farther punished his crime, and fulfilled the Prophet's denunciation.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## ABSALOM'S REBELLION.

WE now come to those domestic calamities which shed bitterness and grief over the latter years of David's life: As a king, and as the leader and prophet of his people, he had ever given an example of obedience to the Divine command. He had removed from the land every vestige of idolatry; he had restored the Ark of the Covenant, and established its rites and ceremonies, which he devoutly observed in his own person: in all his successes he gave glory to the LORD of hosts, and fulfilled the designs of Providence by showing to the heathen world, that prosperity and blessings followed the worship of the One True God. As a king, therefore, David was true to his pure and exalted faith; and, as a king, the blessings promised to his nation expressly on the condition of their abstaining from idolatry, were bestowed. As a man, however, David's character partook of the vices of his age, and of the sins besetting his ardent and impetuous temper; therefore as a man we find him reaping the sure reward of his errors, although outwardly the great and glorious king of God's chosen people. So inflexible is that decree which makes vice misery, and virtue alone happiness, in every station of life.

In the numerous family of David, many causes of dissension and jealousy arose, and his authority was often insufficient to prevent strife. On one occasion, his favourite son Absalom was banished by him for three years, and only pardoned by the artful intervention of Joab. On his return, Absalom laid himself out to obtain the favor of the people, by affecting extreme courtesy of manner, taking part with every one who thought he had suffered wrong at the hands of the king, or of his officers, and complaining in public that the common people were neglected. At these times, he would exclaim, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice." The effect of these artful flatteries was heightened by the beauty of his person. It is said of him, that from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him; and his hair was so long that when it was cut, he boastingly had it weighed, in order to excite the admiration of the people.

At this period it was usual for men to wear the hair long. It is stated by Josephus that the men in Solomon's chosen guard, "had very long heads of hair hanging down, and were clothed in garments of Tyrian purple. They had also dust of gold every day sprinkled on their hair, so that their heads sparkled with the reflection of the sunbeams on the gold." If Absalom used

gold-dust and perfumes, it renders the great weight of his hair less extraordinary.

When Absalom had gained over the hearts of all the people, he desired leave of his father to go to make a feast at Hebron, in fulfilment of a vow, which he pretended to have made: hither all his partizans hastened to join him, besides many who came in ignorance of his criminal designs. He then openly declared his purpose of making himself king, and prepared to march directly against Jerusalem. The grief and indignation of David at this rebellion of his favorite son, were poignant in the extreme. Many of the Psalms composed during this dreadful season of calamity, afford the most pathetic description of his anguish; and are full of tender reproaches, which cannot be read even at this distance of time without emotion.\* Several of the princes of the tribes joined the party of Absalom; and amongst the rest Ahithophel, David's chief counsellor and friend. Of this desertion he makes frequent and touching complaints; and as Ahithophel was a man long versed in the art of government, he especially feared his influence in the councils of the rebels.

\* Psalm lv. 5, 6. "Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me. And I said, Oh that I had the wings of a dove; for then would I fly away, and be at rest." 12. "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him." 13, 14. "But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance," "We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

The danger was sudden and imminent; and it was judged necessary for David to quit Jerusalem, and flee in all haste towards the Jordan; there to wait while an army could be assembled. The High Priests, Zadok and Abiathar would have followed the king with the Ark, but he forbade them; saying, "Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."

"And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot: and all the people that were with him covered every man his head,\* and they went up, weeping as they went up."

As the king thus quitted his capital, he was joined by Hushai, one of his most devoted friends, and an able and eloquent counsellor. Him David desired to return to Jerusalem, there to feign submission to Absalom, learn his councils, and communicate them to Zadok and Abiathar the Priests, who would send word to him by their sons, who remained for that purpose in concealment outside the city. He deemed that the reputation of Hushai would give him sufficient influence to defeat the wise counsels of

\* i. e., Covered his head with a hood or veil, in sign of mourning.



Ahithophel, the only man of Absalom's party whom he feared.

It is impossible to reconcile this treachery with our present enlarged knowledge of moral obligation: but we suggest, as on former occasions, that deceit with enemies was in that age considered as no crime: like some stratagems in modern warfare, it was only thought indicative of skill. It is Christ who commands us to love our enemies, and not to do evil that good may come. With regard to David, his character is nowhere stated to be free from the errors of his age, and his conduct in this instance is simply related as a matter of history; proving the impartial veracity of the sacred historian, but not his approbation.

Scarcely had Hushai been dismissed, when Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, presented himself, with asses loaded with provisions and summer fruits for the king's use.

When asked, where was his master, since he had come alone? Ziba replied, "Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem; for, he said, to day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father: Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord O king."

Another interruption occurred as David proceeded. Shimei, a Benjamite and a kinsman of Saul's, came forth, and called down curses upon his head: Abishai, Joab's brother, asked permis-

sion to chastise him : but David refused, replying, bitterly, "Behold my son seeketh my life, how much more may this Benjamite; let him alone, and let him curse, for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day." Yet was the base Shimei unmoved with this affecting behaviour: he still followed the broken hearted monarch; casting stones, and uttering curses as he went.

David pursued his way, and, on receiving intelligence from Zadok and Abiathar, advising him to continue his retreat, he passed the Jordan, and took up his abode at Mahanaim, a city in the tribe of Gad. Here he received a grateful mark of attachment from Barzillai, a Gileadite of great wealth and power, who with Shobi an Ammonite, and Machir who was also a Gileadite, brought him a large supply of provisions, sufficient for all his people; together with beds and such necessities as it is usual to take on journeys in the east, but which in this hasty flight had been forgotten. Barzillai was a very aged man, and compared with those who now drove their monarch into exile, might be regarded as a stranger: yet he came to meet David with respectful sympathy, and the most generous aid; maintaining him and his followers at his own expense during all their abode at Mahanaim, and never deserting him, until the storm and

peril were past, and prosperity brought again the crowd of ready followers around their restored king. Such noble fidelity might well awaken lasting gratitude. Here David remained in safety, under the care of Barzillai; while his generals assembled those Israelites who remained faithful to him, and marched to meet the rebels.

Meanwhile, Absalom had entered Jerusalem, and assumed all the ensigns of royalty. Then Hushai presented himself before him; and though Absalom's suspicions were at first awakened, knowing that he was one of his father's most trusted friends, yet he succeeded in allaying them, and was soon admitted into his confidence. Ahithophel advised the going in search of David without delay: he rightly argued that he had then but few followers with him; and, were his person secured, all the kingdom would at once acknowledge Absalom for its lawful sovereign. This counsel was at first approved: but Hushai strongly opposed it, alleging many plausible reasons.\* He advised Absalom to wait, and gather an army together,

\* Information of all that occurred was immediately transmitted to David by the High-priests, who dispatched their sons with the intelligence: these young men narrowly escaped being captured. Their departure having been seen from the city, they were pursued, and took shelter in the house of a woman in Bahurim, who put them in a dry well, and covered over the top with a cloth, on which she spread a quantity of ground corn. Here the men remained concealed until their pursuers were gone, when they safely continued their journey.

and then march at its head against David ; his advice pleased Absalom, who adopted it, and rejected the wiser counsel of Ahithophel ; this latter, hereupon, retired indignant to his house, and there hanged himself ; being certain, as Josephus states, that " Absalom would evidently perish, and this in no long time, and that David would overcome him, and return to his kingdom again." Thus miserable and despised died Ahithophel, who closed a long life of honor by the desertion of his friend, and treason to his king.

When Absalom had collected his army together, he marched to meet his father's troops in battle. David was prevailed upon to commit the conduct of this unnatural war to his generals, to whom, in the hearing of all the people, he gave this tender and affectionate charge ; " Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." The battle was decisive : Absalom's army was totally defeated with great slaughter, and he himself forced to flee. Passing under the low branches of an oak, his long hair caught in it, and, the mule on which he rode passing from under him, he was left hanging in the tree. He was seen thus by a man of David's army, who told Joab. This violent and unscrupulous servant of his king, reproached the man for not having slain Absalom ; then taking three darts in his hand, he thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. And ten young men that

bare Joab's armour, compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him."

"And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him; and all Israel fled, every one to his tent."

When the messengers bearing intelligence of the battle came to David, his affection for his son overpowered every other feeling: he asked, "is the young man Absalom safe?" and when he learnt his death, grief overcame him, and he went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

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## CHAPTER XVII.

DAVID'S RETURN TO JERUSALEM. SHEBA'S REBELLION. DAVID NUMBERS THE PEOPLE; A PESTILENCE.

DAVID'S grief for the death of Absalom was excessive: he remained alone, mourning in his house, and refused to join his people in their rejoicings at his victory. Those who had fought in his defence, were ashamed of their very success; for they felt that they had incurred their king's displeasure, while risking their lives in his service. Joab undertook to rouse David from

this dangerous indulgence of his grief. He presented himself before him, and upbraided him in severe terms for thus discouraging his subjects, saying, that he regarded neither princes nor servants, but loved his enemies and hated his friends, and that he perceived if Absalom had lived, and all his faithful servants had died, it would have pleased him well. He added, that the people were so discontented, that if David did not appear they would all desert him, and this would be worse than all that had befallen him from his youth until that time.

Roused by this bold remonstrance, David showed himself to the people; and by his cheerful presence, dissipated their rising discontent.

The rebellion being thus completely quelled, David returned in triumph to Jerusalem. The faithful Barzillai accompanied him to the Jordan, and then took his leave and returned to his house; notwithstanding David's earnest entreaties that he would follow him to Jerusalem, there to receive the honors and rewards which his attachment had so justly merited. But Barzillai replied, "I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king? Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward. Let thy

servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried in the grave of my father and my mother. But behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king: and do to him what shall seem good unto thee." David willingly complied with the good Barzillai's request; he parted from him with every mark of affection, and carried his son with him to Jerusalem, where he greatly enriched him during his life, and at his death recommended him in an especial manner to Solomon.

A very different character met David in the person of Shimei the Benjamite; the man who had heaped curses on his head, the day he fled from Jerusalem. With the same baseness of spirit with which he had reviled his sovereign in adversity, he now hastened with servile fear to demand his pardon. Again Abishai would have put him to death, but David generously interposed; saying, "shall any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do I not know that I am this day king over Israel!" Therefore the king said unto Shimei, "Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him."

"And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace."

"And it came to pass, when he was come to Jerusalem, to meet the king, that the king said

unto him, wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth?"

"And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me: for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king: but my lord the king is an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes. For all my father's house were but dead men before the lord my king: yet didst thou set thy servant amongst them that did eat at thine own table. What right therefore have I to cry any more unto the king."

"And the king said, why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land."

It is evident from David's reply that he did not give entire credit to Mephibosheth's story, which is open to suspicion, even in the brief record of the sacred historian; since it is impossible to believe that a person of Mephibosheth's rank and wealth, should have been unable to procure the means of quitting Jerusalem; and the marks of mourning which he exhibited, might be easily assumed, when Absalom's cause was lost. It seems probable that David had reason to suspect his sincerity, yet that for his father Jonathan's sake, he refused to enquire into his conduct; but contented himself with diminishing his influence, by dividing his inheritance with Ziba.



Although David thus returned triumphant to his capital, peace was not yet restored to his dominions. In consequence of the jealousy of the tribe of Benjamin, against the men of Judah, Sheba, a turbulent leader amongst them, again raised the standard of revolt, and great numbers joined him. David commanded Amasa to collect together the men of Judah, and be ready to go against Sheba in three days; or, he said, Sheba shall do us more harm than did Absalom. Amasa, not bringing the tribe of Judah up in time, David ordered Abishai to set forth with the troops which he commanded, and attack Sheba before he should enter into a fortified city, and so protract the war. Abishai hastened to do as David commanded: he was joined by his brother Joab, who, whatever might be his crimes and ambition, was an able and experienced general. Both the brothers were now stimulated by jealousy of Amasa, who was David's nephew, and whom he had pardoned after the revolt of Absalom, and placed high in his confidence; perhaps in the hope of curbing the pride, and lessening the power of these haughty sons of Zeruiah; but this expectation was fearfully disappointed. When Amasa joined his forces with those of Joab and Abishai, as they were following after Sheba, Joab called to Amasa, and approaching him close, as if to give him the kiss of respectful salutation, treacherously stabbed him; in the same manner, and for the same cause, as he had before murdered Abner.

After this deed of treachery, Joab pursued Sheba, who taking refuge in a walled town, a woman of the city persuaded the people to save themselves by giving him up. His head was cut off, and thrown over the wall to Joab, who immediately withdrew his troops, and returned to Jerusalem.

A famine of three years afflicted the land, after the rebellion of Absalom. It was sent as a punishment for the cruel massacre of the Gibeonites, and is memorable as showing the strength and touching self-sacrifice of a mother's love. The Gibeonites having demanded and put to death seven of Saul's descendants, amongst whom were two sons of Rizpah, the bodies were left exposed to the birds and beasts of prey, according to the savage custom of that age. The wretched mother hastened to the spot; "And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of the harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven,"—that is, until the drought ceased. And she "suffered neither the birds of the air to rest upon them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night." Her devoted love was rewarded: it was told David what Rizpah had done; and he sent for the bodies of Saul and Jonathan, and these seven sons, and buried them with honor in the sepulchre of Kish. This touching story of domestic sorrow and parental love, affords a grateful relief amidst

the fierce passions and darker shades of character, which the page of history records.\*

We now come to the last important transaction in David's life. When the land was again in peace, and prosperity at home and victory abroad seemed to invite the king and his people to the tranquil enjoyment of the blessings God had bestowed upon them, David ordered a general numbering of the people; with the view, apparently, of making those fit to bear arms serve in his armies; thus fostering a warlike spirit in the nation, which was opposed to the law of Moses, and contrary to the Divine command. The country of Canaan, apportioned to them by promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, was to be the inheritance of the chosen people of Jehovah: but they were to dwell in it in peace, under the vine and under the fig tree; and wars of aggression and ambition were forbidden in the strongest terms. The utmost limits of this kingdom were attained; and whether David ordered this census with the design of making farther conquests, or from a spirit of vain glory, is not stated by the sacred historian: but either the act, or the motive of the act, must have been clearly unlawful, and eminently dangerous, when even Joab endeavoured to dissuade David from it. He strongly remon-

\* For an explanation of the circumstances of this famine, and the death of Saul's sons, see note in *Jahn's History of the Hebrew Commonwealth*, at the close of the life of David.

strated against making the census, but undertook it, though with evident reluctance.

After the numbering of the people, the heart of David smote him for the sin he had committed.

"For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee."

"So Gad came to David and told him, and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me."

"And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man."

Thus David chose the pestilence, which desolated the country during three days: but when he confessed his sin, and with a feeling natural to real repentance, prayed that the chastisement might fall upon him alone, and his people be spared, the prophet was again sent to him, and commanded him to rear an altar in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, which was situated near Jerusalem, and then the dreadful pestilence should be stayed.

"And David, according to the saying of Gad, went up, as the LORD commanded."

"And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on towards him: and Araunah went out, and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground."

"And Araunah said, wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, to buy the threshing floor of thee, to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people."

"And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood."

"All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king. And Araunah said unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee."

"And the king said unto Araunah, Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee for a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver."

"And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was entreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel."

This account closes the 2nd Book of Samuel.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

DAVID CAUSES SOLOMON TO BE PROCLAIMED KING. HIS LAST INSTRUCTIONS, DEATH, AND CHARACTER.

THE closing scene of David's long and eventful life, presents a mournful picture of outward worldly splendour, and domestic troubles and dissension. The sword had not departed from his family; and the private happiness he had wantonly invaded, had fled from his own house. The afflictions of age had now fallen heavily upon him, and the days were come when "he had no pleasure in them:" the warmth of life scarcely animated his exhausted frame, and, apart in his chamber, he heeded not either the pleasures or the cares of royalty. While thus slowly sinking into the grave, his throne, which was so soon to be vacant, was openly contended for. Adonijah, his son, the next in seniority to Absalom, and who, like him, had been a favorite with his father, conferred with Joab and with Abiathar the priest, to assert his claim to the crown of Israel, in opposition to Solomon, whom David had appointed to succeed him. The king's death being daily expected, Adonijah made a feast, to which he invited all his party, and the great men of the court; excepting Nathan the prophet, and David's mighty men, who remained

true to their dying monarch. As the consequences of Adonijah's claim to the throne might have been fatal to the rights of Solomon and to the peace of the kingdom, Nathan the prophet advised Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, to acquaint David with Adonijah's treason; promising to come in and confirm her words.

"And Bathsheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king, and the king said, what wouldst thou?"

"And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne."

"And now behold, Adonijah reigneth: and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host; but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders."

"And lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in."

"And they told the king, saying, Behold, Nathan the prophet. And when he was come

in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground."

"And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah. But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the servant of Solomon, hath he not called. Is this thing done by my lord the king? and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"

On hearing this, David commanded Nathan, and Benaiah a captain of his forces, and Zadok the High Priest, to accompany Solomon through Jerusalem in solemn procession, with all the emblems of royalty; there to seat him upon his own throne, and proclaim him king before all the people. This was done, accordingly; and Solomon, being placed upon the king's mule, and attended by the Prophet Nathan, the High Priest, and chief officers of the state, was led forth to Gibeon,\* a spring in a valley situated on the side of Jerusalem, opposite to that where Adonijah was holding his feast. Here the High

\* Supposed to be the same as the pool of Siloam, mentioned in the New Testament.



Priest anointed him : the trumpets blew, and all the people cried, "God save king Solomon." "And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth was rent with the sound of them." When Adonijah and his party heard the shouts of the people, and the noise of the trumpets, and were told how David had made Solomon king, they were all afraid, "and rose up, and went every man his way." Adonijah justly feared the consequences of his rebellion : he took refuge in the court of the Tabernacle, and laid hold of the horns of the altar, as was the manner of criminals who fled from the vengeance of private foes.\* From thence he sent to demand a promise of safety, and pardon ; to which Solomon returned this equally wise and generous reply, "If he will show himself a worthy man, then shall not a hair of him fall to the earth : but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die."

"So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon. And Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house."

Solomon being anointed and crowned, and the country peaceable, the aged and venerable

\* *Of private foes* : for it does not appear that the Mosaic law upheld the ancient abuse of Sanctuaries, in screening felons from justice. By the law of Moses, Sanctuaries were only allowed to give refuge in peculiar cases, such as killing a man by accident, or in a sudden quarrel, without premeditated malice. Solomon did not scruple to slay Joab at the altar.

monarch prepared to depart to the long last home of all the living: he addressed a solemn charge to his son Solomon, exhorting him to walk in the ways of the Lord his God, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses; that he might prosper in all that he did, and that the promise made to him, that there should not fail a man to sit on the throne of Israel, might be fulfilled. David enumerated the riches he had laid up, and the materials of every sort he had prepared for the building of a great and glorious temple to Jehovah; and he exhorted Solomon to accomplish this honored work, which had been forbidden to himself, because "he had shed much blood;" lastly, he gave him wise and just counsel with regard to his future government, and respecting some of the men in chief power, whose character and designs were dangerous, and might be fatal to a young and inexperienced sovereign. His charge with respect to Joab, was a needful act of justice and foresight. This bold, imperious, and unscrupulous man, had nevertheless been faithful to David, and his companion during years of peril, wandering, and ill fortune: when this time of adversity was passed, he remained equally faithful; but having been so long the chief and almost sole adviser and friend of his sovereign, his haughty and exacting spirit would not suffer any rival in his

favor, and he even murdered two able generals, whose influence he feared. Yet could not David himself inflict the punishment his crimes merited; having probably sworn friendship with him; an oath which it was esteemed sinful under any circumstances to violate. It is clear, however, that such a man, who had already headed Adonijah's party, would have been a dangerous enemy in the court of Solomon; and to leave him unpunished was to encourage the crimes he had so successfully committed: these considerations explain and justify the charge which David gave concerning him. ' .

"Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the host of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace."

The same union of wisdom and justice marked the aged monarch's charge respecting Shimei, the Benjamite attached to Saul's family, who had cursed David when he fled from Jerusalem, on Absalom's rebellion. Having sworn forgiveness for this offence, he would not have it punished; but knowing him to be a secret enemy, he desired Solomon not to hold him guiltless, nor yet to bring his hoar head down

to the grave with blood.\* Acting upon this advice, Solomon freely pardoned Shimei, on condition of his never quitting Jerusalem, where his intrigues would be watched, and prevented: we shall relate in the history of that king, what afterwards befel him.

While warning his youthful successor against his enemies, David forgot not to recommend his faithful friends to his gratitude. "Shew kindness," he said, "to the sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me, when I fled because of Absalom thy brother."

Having ended his charge to Solomon, and again exhorted him to continue faithful to the God of his fathers, and repeated the promises made to him and his children's children, if he obeyed, "David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David," after a reign of forty years: seven in Hebron, and thirty-three in Jerusalem.

In estimating the character of David, the king, the poet, and the prophet of his people, we must be careful to bear in mind the age and circumstances in which he lived, the trials to

\* The negation in the second clause is said to be required by the Hebrew idiom: this is stated by learned commentators, and renders the sense clear, which is otherwise obscure and contradictory: the meaning thus being, that, since David had sworn not to put Shimei to death, his life was to be spared; but being a dangerous and wily enemy, Solomon was to regard him as such, and take precautions against his treachery, which exactly agrees with the conduct he pursued.

which he was exposed, and the opinions at that time generally admitted and acted upon. Allowing for these differences, there is no monarch of antiquity whose career is so deeply interesting, or who displays a rarer union of firmness in adversity, gentleness in domestic life, magnanimous forgiveness of injuries, humility in high fortune, and religious trust in all. His devotion was not the ostentatious display of politic superstition: it was the natural feeling of his heart,—a part of himself, which supported him when all outward supports failed, and when his own familiar friend, nay, his own son sought after his life. But the character of David is best studied in his Psalms. Who that reads these, and finds in them the expression of his own deepest feelings,—remorse for sin,—thankfulness for deliverance,—prayers for succour and strength,—and throughout all, love, gratitude and reverence for the LORD God of his fathers: who that finds in these sublime odes, expression for devout submission, gratitude and love, which no subsequent writer has ever equalled,—but must confess that never was the veneration with which his memory has been regarded more truly deserved? That he committed grievous sins, the faithful historians of his life have not attempted to deny: but if his sins were great, his repentance was bitter and sincere. “He offers no plea of justification,” (we quote the words of Mr. Wellbeloved,) “he seeks not for any circumstances that palliate his offence: he labours to

find expressions strong enough to describe his unequalled criminality, and casts himself entirely on the mercy of that great and holy Being whose laws he had so daringly violated: "My transgression I acknowledge—my sin is continually before me." It is the frail nature of man to be sinful, and who shall judge his brother? But forgiveness has been promised to the truly penitent; and that such was the aged monarch of Israel, we know by his repentance being accepted by the Great Searcher of hearts.\*

\* We regret that our limits will not allow us to insert the admirably drawn character of David, given in *Jahn's Hebrew Commonwealth*; we must be satisfied with referring our readers to it, and particularly to that part relating to the language used in the Psalms.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### SOLOMON'S CHOICE OF WISDOM. THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE. ITS DEDICATION.

THE last act of David's life, was to establish Solomon upon the throne. He had been chosen out of David's numerous family by the express command of the LORD, who had thought fit to sanction, in an especial manner, his appointment

to the royal dignity, and had sent Nathan the prophet to bestow upon him a name significant of his future favor, 'Jedidiah,' which means in Hebrew, 'Beloved of the LORD.' In the last feeble days of David's life, we have seen that Adonijah attempted to set aside this settlement, and to seize the crown; in which he was assisted by Joab, and Abiathar the priest. The design was frustrated by the vigilance of the prophet Nathan; but the ambition of Adonijah was only checked for the time, not eradicated, by the firmness of David, and the magnanimous pardon of Solomon; it broke out again in an artful request to have Abishag to wife, on which Solomon ordered him to be seized and put to death: immediately Joab, who had participated in the treason of Adonijah, fled in haste to the Tabernacle, and took hold of the horns of the altar. Notwithstanding this, Solomon ordered him to be slain; the sacred Tabernacle of the God of justice, being at no time, and by no law, ever made the sanctuary of crime. Thus died Joab, whose services and early fidelity to David, were more than overbalanced by his evil passions, lawless violence, and daring insubordination. Abiathar, the high-priest, who had also joined Adonijah, was deposed, and the priesthood thus ceased in the house of Eli.

That the history may not be interrupted, we will relate here the end of Shimei, the follower of Saul, who cursed David when flying from Jerusalem, on the revolt of Absalom. In con-

formity with the wise caution of his father David, Solomon had commanded this disaffected man to reside at Jerusalem, where he could not carry on any treacherous designs without being discovered; declaring, at the same time, that his life was safe only so long as he strictly obeyed this injunction: "For it shall be that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kedron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days." Sometime after, on pretence of seeking two of his servants, Shimei left Jerusalem, and went as far as Gath. Solomon instantly commanded him to be brought into his presence, when, reminding him of his oath, that he should surely die on the day he went abroad, and reproaching him for his former base conduct to David, he commanded him to be put to death. There can be little doubt that Shimei purposed treachery, and sought to leave Jerusalem at first on some apparently innocent pretext, in order to deceive the vigilance of the king; when, having lulled his suspicions, he would be able to quit the city whenever he chose, and thus renew his intrigues: he was taken in his own toils, and justly paid the forfeit of his crimes.

The first act of Solomon was to offer a public sacrifice to the LORD at Gibeon, where the



Tabernacle then was.\* On the night following, God appeared unto Solomon in a dream, and commanded him to ask for any earthly blessing which he should most desire: "And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can judge this thy people that is so great."

"And God said unto Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had, that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like."

Endowed thus with superior wisdom, seated on a peaceful throne, and enriched with wealth far beyond the wants of the most luxurious monarch, or the most extended ambition—Solomon, thus blessed with every earthly advantage,

\* There is no mention of the time or purpose of the removal of the Tabernacle to Gibeon, a place about five miles north of Jerusalem.

began his reign in a manner worthy of his high privileges. He commenced the building of that glorious temple, which his father had been forbidden to rear, and which had been reserved for him to accomplish. For this purpose he sent to Hiram, king of Tyre, to furnish workmen, hewers of wood and stone, to assist his own people in preparing materials for the great work. Hiram hereupon made a treaty with Solomon, by which he agreed to send men to the mountains of Lebanon, to hew cedars and fir trees, and bring the timber in ships to the ports of Judea; whence they returned loaded with corn, wine and oil, in exchange. Besides the men of Tyre, thirty thousand Israelites went to Lebanon, in courses of ten thousand each, changing every four months, to work with the subjects of Hiram, in hewing and carving the wood and stones: for every part of the building was so fitted and measured, that the stones and beams were ready to be put together when they were brought to Jerusalem; "so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building." In addition to these hewers of wood in the mountains of Lebanon, seventy thousand persons, the descendants of the ancient Canaanites, were employed in carrying burdens; eighty thousand in cutting stone in the quarries, and more than three thousand overseers. The most skilful artists were sent for from Tyre, the chief of whom, Hiram, is mentioned by name, as excel-

ling in all kinds of "working in gold and silver and brass;" to him was entrusted what Josephus calls the 'mechanical works about the temple,' the carving and designs, with the two brass pillars, Jachin and Boaz, which stood on each side the entrance of the vestibule; also the Brazen Sea or Laver, the golden tables and candlesticks, &c., all of which were as remarkable for their exquisite workmanship, as for their costly materials. For seven years these magnificent works were carried on; at the end of which comparatively short period, arose the temple of Solomon, the most perfect edifice, from its rich materials, elaborate workmanship, and commanding situation, of any perhaps in the world. Having described so minutely the Tabernacle and its service, we shall only briefly state the general plan of this famous temple, which was so soon to be destroyed, and respecting the details of which there is necessarily much uncertainty.

Solomon erected the Temple on the summit of Mount Moriah, encreasing the surface by building walls down into the valley beneath, and filling the intervening space with earth. There were two courts:\* the outer one, called the Great Court, or Court of the Gentiles, surrounded by a double row of cloisters, with roofs of cedar; the inner one, or Court of the Priests, in front of the Sanctuary, into which none entered but the Priests, and those who

\* Two courts, or three; it is difficult to understand the different accounts.

came to offer sacrifices. In this Court stood the Altar of Burnt Offerings, made of unhewn stone. On the south side, near the entrance to the Sanctuary, stood the great Brazen Laver, or Molten Sea, holding water wherein the Priests washed their hands and feet, when they entered into the Temple, or were to ascend the Altar. This Laver was a large circular basin of brass, curiously carved, ten feet in diameter, resting upon a solid pillar in the centre, and on the figures of twelve oxen, whose faces turned to the four winds.

For cleansing the Sacrifices, water was supplied by ten smaller Lavers, fixed on square bases also richly carved, turning upon wheels: these were ranged five on each side, along the north and south sides of the court. The Sanctuary itself rose in splendid magnificence to the west; the entrance was under a vestibule or porch, one hundred and twenty cubits high, facing the east: it extended the whole width of the building, and was adorned with the two famous pillars, Jachin and Boaz. These pillars were of brass, hollow, thirty-six cubits high, including the base and chapiters, which last were ornamented with net work, interwoven with the palm, the lily, (or lotus) and pomegranate. The porch far exceeded the rest of the sacred edifice in height, in the manner of many Egyptian temples, and some modern cathedrals. From this vestibule folding doors richly carved, and overlaid with gold, led to the Holy Place. In this stood

the Altar of Incense ; ten Tables, all overlaid with gold, on one of which stood the Shew bread ; ten golden candlesticks, and one hundred vessels of gold. Folding doors, similar to those which led from the Porch, separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Within its sacred precincts, where silence for ever reigned, and no human being approached, save the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, within this holiest portion of the Sanctuary, rested the Ark of the Covenant, under the extended wings of the two Cherubim. Here the Shekinah manifested the immediate Presence of Jehovah.

The whole of the inside of the Sanctuary was lined with cedar, curiously carved and overlaid with the purest gold : over the doors hung curtains or veils, of fine linens richly embroidered in colours of blue, purple, and scarlet : these partially concealed the entrance, when the doors were open, and heightened the graceful splendour of this magnificent Temple. All the vessels and utensils used within the Sanctuary were of gold : others formed of silver and brass were so rich and so numerous, that neither their weight nor number could be reckoned. Chambers were built on each side the Holy Place, but in such a manner as not to touch it ; also there were various apartments round the courts ; some used for store houses ; some for the use of the Priests, who lived within the precincts whilst serving in their courses ; and others for the different offices connected with the sacerdotal functions ; such as the

fulfilling of vows, the examination of Lepers, &c. The whole edifice rose resplendent on the lofty summit of Mount Moriah; an object of wonder, admiration and religious awe to the crowds of devout worshippers, who came up at the Festivals to pay their united vows and offerings within its courts.

When the Temple was completed, Solomon assembled all the people, with the priests and Levites, to assist at its dedication, and in the solemn ceremony of bringing the Ark of the Covenant from Mount Sion, and placing it within the sanctuary. Nothing could exceed the imposing grandeur of the scene. The king, the Priests in their sacrificial robes, and all the tribe of Levi, who attended without regard to their usual courses—the elders and the chiefs of the different Tribes, the whole nation in thousands and tens of thousands thronged the spacious courts, and knelt awe-struck before the presence of Jehovah.

The Levites with their harps and psalteries and instruments of music, stood round the altar, with one hundred and twenty priests sounding trumpets, and as the Ark was seen approaching borne by the priests, the air was rent with the sudden burst of the instruments, and a chorus of praise and thanksgiving rose from the assembled thousands. As the priests proceeded across the court, and, entering the Holy of Holies, deposited the Ark of the Covenant under the wings of the Cherubim, the people

lifted up their voices, with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, "For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever:" Then, as the priests withdrew, "the house was filled with a cloud, and the Glory of the LORD filled the Sanctuary."

Then Solomon, rising from his throne, which was erected in front of the Temple, in sight of all the people, knelt down, and stretching forth his hands towards Heaven, uttered that sublime Prayer which has no parallel in that age. No heathen could ever attain to such conceptions of God;—no boasted philosopher of antiquity ever taught such trusting faith—such reference in all the events of life to the sovereign ruler of the universe. While dedicating to the worship of Jehovah that Temple which was already consecrated by the symbol of His Presence, Solomon acknowledged the great truth of God's incomprehensible nature, and his infinite inconceivable perfection. First pronouncing a blessing upon the congregation of Israel, and enumerating the mercies bestowed upon his father David, the choice of Jerusalem for the city where God's name should be, the desire of David to build the House of the LORD, and the selection of himself to accomplish this great and glorious work, he then turns towards the Sanctuary, and overpowered with the idea of the infinite greatness of the Divine Being, he breaks forth—

“But will God indeed dwell on earth? behold the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much more this house that I have builded.” But recalling the gracious promise that His name should be there, he prays that when the people turn to this house and offer their petitions for pardon and assistance, God will hearken unto their supplication. “And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place; and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest forgive.” When the people should be smitten before their enemies—when the heavens should be shut up and there should be no rain—when there should be famine, or pestilence, or mildew, or locust—when the enemy besieged them in their cities—when they were carried captive into a strange land, and should bethink themselves in that land, and repent, and return unto God with their whole hearts—in all these, and in every affliction and distress, then should they turn towards that House, and offer their supplication, and God would hearken unto their prayers. Even the stranger was to partake in the blessing. “Moreover, concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name’s sake. (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm.) When he shall come and pray towards this house. Hear thou in heaven



thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house which I have builded, is called by thy name."

Solomon's prayer was accepted: as he ended, "fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement and worshipped, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Thus was the Temple dedicated. The festival lasted two weeks, and the immense number of sacrifices prepared by Solomon, amounting to many thousands, sufficed to feed the assembled multitude during the whole fourteen days; then the people were dismissed to their homes, "and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people."

Thus have we followed the sacred historians, in tracing the descendants of Abraham to the reign of Solomon, and the building of the Temple. The promise made to him, that the land of Canaan wherein he had not then a foot of ground, should be the inheritance of his chil-

dren, we have seen fulfilled, and the boundaries of that kingdom, from the sea to the Euphrates, have been attained. The Israelites have been chastened with suffering, and again blessed with peace and happiness, but always under the same invariable and immutable law, whether in bondage, in the wilderness, or in the land of promise—that law which affixed God's blessing on His chosen people so long, and so long only, as they lived in faith and obedience to His most holy will.

# CHART OF CONTEMPORARY HISTORY,

(According to Archbishop Usher.)

Yrs. before Christ.	ISRAEL.	EGYPT.	ASSYRIA.	GREECE.	Remarkable Men and Events.
1500	The Israelites leave Egypt under Moses 1491.  The Israelites en- ter Canaan under Joshua, 1451.	? Sesostris.	Thirty-two Kings between Ninus the son of Semiramis, and Sardanapalus, remarkable only for their extreme effeminacy.	? Cadmus carries letters into Greece, 1493.	
1400	Ehud.				Minos, Lawgiver of Crete.
1300	Deborah and Barak  Gideon.				Expedition of the Argonauts.
1200	Jephthah.  Eli, High Priest.  Samson dies. Samuel, Judge of Israel.	Names of Kings not known.			Siege of Troy.
1100	Saul, 1095.  David, 1045.  Solomon, 1015.				Codrus King of Athens. Medon the First Archon.
1000	(Judah.) (Israel.) Rehobo- am, &c. Jerobo- am, &c.	Senn.			? Homer, B. C. according to the Athenian Marbles. ? Hesiod 907

## CHAPTER XX.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY.

To form a truer estimate of the state of the Israelites, and the superiority of their government, it is desirable to take a short view of the condition of other ancient nations at this period. The earliest people who attained civilization and the benefit of a fixed government, were the Egyptian; the history of Joseph, and the subsequent bondage of the Israelites, will have given some idea of the state of Egypt at that time, of which little is known with certainty, until a much later period. The nation had been under subjection to a foreign race, called by their historians, Shepherd-Kings, who established a cruel, and formidable tyranny, long remembered with dread and detestation. After the departure of the Israelites, came the reign of Sesostris, whose conquests from the Ganges to the Danube occupied a space of nine years; during which time the Israelites were in the Desert, probably in that part of the peninsular situated near Mount Sinai, which is sheltered on the north by a chain of mountains: this would secure them from the attack of Sesostris, or rather prevent their existence being known to him. After Sesostris, a succession of kings reigned in Egypt, whose history is involved in obscurity and fable. Some names are preserved; but the

authority on which these rest is not yet satisfactorily ascertained, and waits for farther investigation.\* When the annals of a nation are thus obscure, we can form but an imperfect idea of their state of civilization, and the condition of the people: and it would be unjust to consider the absence of records intelligible to us as always a proof of barbarism; but in the case of the Egyptians we know that at a much later period, though the priests were famed for their knowledge, and though the Pyramids and Temples now standing attest their extraordinary skill in mechanics and the arts, yet the ignorance and debased superstition of the people were the wonder and scorn even of their contemporaries. When Apis the Bull, when crocodiles and cats, and even in some parts the leeks and onions upon which they fed, were regarded as fit representations of the divinity, and received their worship, can we suppose the people to be enlightened; or far removed from the first state of society, when men unite for the sole purpose of self-preservation, and when the multitude are occupied by no

\* The Chronology of the early Egyptian kings was, till lately, involved in almost inextricable difficulties. Modern discoveries in reading hieroglyphical inscriptions are now throwing light on the subject, and many former errors are being corrected. The reign of Sesostris is placed during the wanderings of the Israelites in the Desert, as that date is received by able chronologists and commentators, and agrees remarkably with the history of the Israelites; but as it is a date which has been differently fixed by different writers, a note of interrogation is put before the name in the chart, to mark the uncertainty which rests upon it.

thought, no pursuit higher than what is required by their daily routine of toil or pleasure? Another peculiarity of the Egyptian laws and customs, would tend to keep the mass of the people stationary in regard to intellectual vigor and capacity: they were divided into castes, something in the manner of the modern Hindoos; one order were priests, another soldiers, another artisans, and so on; and even in the trades, no deviation from the one followed by the head of the family was allowed, whatever might be the talents and inclination of the children. If the father were a physician, so must be the sons: if the father followed some mechanical art, so must the sons:—from generation to generation the same rank was held, the same occupations were followed. The idea was, that as perfection cannot be attained in any art without long practice, so by binding every man to his profession for life, the state secured the greatest skill in each department. But experience shows that this opinion is erroneous; and that as certain talents and character do not descend in the same families, or in fact follow any fixed rule, so the way of life should (within certain limits, and as far as is compatible with order and subordination) be open to the choice of all; as it is then to be supposed each will select that for which his talents are best fitted. Now this was impossible in Egypt: the law of castes was rigid, and thus, though early standing high in civilization as compared with the nations

round, the Egyptians appear to have remained nearly stationary until the time of the Ptolemies, more than six centuries later than the reign of David. This is quite compatible with the famed "learning of the Egyptians;" this learning being confined to the priests, who were doubtless the wisest, as well as the most artful men of their age. Few were initiated into their mysteries, and none were permitted to impart the secrets of their knowledge to the multitude. They had two sorts of philosophy; one for their common teachings, another for themselves and the few they admitted to partake their real sentiments; nay, their language had its mysteries, and none but the initiated could read that in which they conveyed their most sacred truths. Let us compare this state of things with the superior polity of the Israelites. Instead of the strict, undeviating law of caste, all the people enjoyed equal privileges, had equal rights, and, excepting the priesthood and order of Levites, were free to choose whatever occupation suited their habits and character. Being an agricultural people, and each family having its allotment of land, which no improvidence could alienate for more than fifty years, the cultivation of the soil was the favorite occupation of the Israelites: but this varied, according to individual inclination. One tribe devoted itself to the feeding of cattle, another to trading in ships; while vineyards, and olive grounds, diversified the peaceful scene. The only beneficial object to be attained by the

separation of castes, namely, that of reserving an order of men, who, having no laborious toil to perform and being provided with the means of an honorable subsistence, should have leisure for the pursuits of learning and science, and thus save the nation from falling into ignorance—this great object was attained by separating the Levites, and giving them a sufficient but not luxurious subsistence, and enjoining upon them the careful study of their law. The Religious Law, being at the same time the Civil Law of the land, the Levites became necessarily the Scribes (or lawyers) of the people. As also many of the infectious diseases to which the Israelites were subject were, for greater security, placed under the care of the priests, that is, no leper could mix in social life until the priest had pronounced him clean, or perfectly cured, so the Levites became naturally the Physicians of the nation. Thus were the wants of the people in both these departments provided for, naturally, easily, and as a matter of individual choice, rather than by a stern, despotic rule, which might either irritate opposition, or palsy the energies of those who submitted to its yoke. Another essential difference is to be noticed in the place of residence chosen for the Levites: this was not in the capital of the empire, nor yet was it in any one spot, where they would live secluded, and regard themselves as distinct from their fellow countrymen. The Levites had about four towns, with a portion of land round, in each



tribe; and, as they only went up to Jerusalem to perform their course of service in the Temple twice a year, their lives were passed in the midst of their fellow men, in daily intercourse with those of other tribes, and occupied in part with the same simple pleasures and pursuits. As a proof of the wisdom of this institution, it is only necessary to state, that from the first settlement of the Israelites in Canaan, to the time of the captivity, there is no record of any murmuring of the people against the privileges of the Levites, nor any encroachment on the part of this favored body on the rights of the people.

The next kingdom which rose to early eminence after the Egyptian, was the Assyrian: it comprised all the empire afterwards divided into the two Assyrian kingdoms of Babylon and Nineveh, together with the Medes, and derived its origin from Nimrod, or Belus, who was a mighty hunter and a conqueror. This empire was farther extended, and the famous city of Babylon built, by Semiramis, a queen whose extraordinary military courage, talents, and genius for government have rendered her name illustrious, even to a proverb. The city of Babylon with its massive walls, on which six chariots could be driven abreast, and which were of sixty miles extent, with its temples and palaces, and its hanging gardens one of the wonders of the world—this far-famed city, and Nineveh scarcely less famous, were the capitals of this vast empire, and would appear to indicate a high state of

civilization: yet how far the mass of the people shared in the refinements and splendour of their monarch, is left in doubt; certain it is, that after the death of Semiramis her son Ninyas led a life of effeminacy and sloth, and was followed by a succession of thirty-two princes, (if their chronology is to be relied on) of the same character; they never quitted the walls of their palaces, and even their names are unrecorded. It was during the ignominious reigns of these kings, that David and Solomon raised the kingdom of Israel to its highest pitch of prosperity and glory.

The next state which rose to pre-eminence was Greece: but in the time of David it was yet in its infancy, and only known by the founding of several small cities and states, which were afterwards to become the most celebrated places of the whole ancient world, and by the half fabulous and half historical achievements of its heroes and demigods. Homer lived, it is supposed by some, contemporary with Solomon; but, according to the Arundelian marbles, he flourished about a hundred years later, in 907 before Christ: we may in either case judge by his immortal poems, which so minutely describe the manners of that age, to what degree of civilization the Grecians had then attained, and how little the happiness and welfare of the people were regarded, when distinct from the glory of their kings. The expedition of the Argonauts had taken place nearly two centuries before, and

the Siege of Troy about seventy years after that. Several of the Grecian states had been founded about five centuries earlier: Sicyon, the first state, 2089 years before Christ: Athens, by Cecrops, 1556 before Christ: but of the succeeding history of these cities and their kings, little is known with certainty. Contemporary with Saul, Codrus reigned in Athens, who devoted himself to die for his country in the following manner. In a war with the Heraclides, an oracle having declared that victory would attend that nation which lost its king, Codrus disguised himself as a common man, attacked the enemy, and was slain. After his death, the Athenians resolved to change their form of government, and Medon the son of Codrus, was made Archon; the title of King being for ever abolished. At first the dignity of Archon was conferred for life, but afterwards limited to ten years, and later still the office was annual, and the number of Archons encreased to nine. This change in the government of Athens took place in the time of David.

Sparta and Thebes were likewise founded; but their history at this period is obscured by fable, and presents nothing to interest the enquirer, and much to disgust.

From this brief survey of the kingdoms contemporary with Israel previous to the reign of Solomon, we shall be able to compare the state of Judea with that of these celebrated nations at this period.

Looking to Greece, to Egypt, and to Assyria as separate empires, each remarkable for unrivalled monuments of art, or for statesmen, poets, and philosophers whose genius casts a veil of splendour over their own times, and enlightens our own—reading these histories detached, and regarding their epochs and periods of civilization, only as epochs and periods relative to their own advancement or degeneracy,—we unavoidably connect the whole together, and having formed an idea of the vastness of one empire, the mysterious monuments of another, and the brilliant genius and deep philosophy of a third, we take up this idea with very slight modification, whenever the names of these celebrated nations occur, and compare them, thus adorned with the accumulated advantages of their whole duration, with a single reign or an earlier period in another state. This is particularly the case with the history of the Israelites. Possessing, as we do, a detailed account of their Patriarchs, and the first formation of their laws and government, and not having the detailed account of other nations until a much later period of their history, we naturally place the two periods of similar civilization together, instead of comparing them at the same period of time. It is unnecessary to point out the injustice of this erroneous comparison. As well might England in the time of Alfred be compared with France in the reign of Louis XIV., and our early institutions and manners be condemned as

incomplete and barbarous, because wanting in the experienced wisdom and refinement of a later age.

The reign of David is many centuries earlier than the best periods of Grecian, Egyptian, and Assyrian history; before the Persian and Macedonian empires had a name, and before Romulus had built the walls of his infant city, which was to subdue all these kingdoms after their separate greatness had been attained, enjoyed, and lost. We refer therefore our readers to those few vestiges of the beginning of these kingdoms, the histories blended with fable, distorted by superstition, and stained with cruelty, and then, and then only, the comparison may be fairly made and truly appreciated, between the laws, the institutions, the tone of morals and manners, the habits and occupations of the Israelites, and those of their heathen contemporaries.

THE END.

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